

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Alpha Training and Development Centre

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 11 February 2016

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MoE Number: 8816
NZQA Reference: C20081
Dates of EER visit: 17 and 18 November 2015

Final Report

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: | Alpha Training and Development Centre (Alpha) |
| Type: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| First registered: | 19 October 1992 |
| Location: | 1 Smith Street, Lepperton, New Plymouth |
| Delivery sites: | One training site as above |
| Courses currently delivered: | Certificate in Welding (Level 4) |
| Code of Practice signatory: | Not applicable |
| Number of students: | Domestic: 12 equivalent full-time students (EFTS) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Māori: 33 per cent• European: 59 per cent• Pasifika: 8 per cent International: nil |
| Number of staff: | Two full-time equivalents; one part-time equivalent |
| Scope of active accreditation: | The full accreditation for Alpha is available at: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=881679001 |
| Distinctive characteristics: | Alpha is a small, family-owned PTE delivering one course. The PTE delivers training in engineering, hand and power tools and workshop health and safety. The training enables individuals to practise and/or undertake tests for welding qualifications – |

both industry-developed and those aligned to the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. The main training site is owned by the family. Located on the property is a separate engineering business, also owned by one of the family members. The business is independent of the PTE; however, it is often used as an additional advanced training resource for selected Alpha learners.

Recent significant changes: Alpha is now the only provider in the region of the level 4 welding qualification after the local polytechnic, Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT), announced it was ceasing its welding programme in 2016. With the closure of the polytechnic's welding course, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has approached Alpha to consider taking on four to five more EFTS.

Previous quality assurance history: In relation to previous external evaluation reviews (EER), Alpha was previously quality assured by NZQA in March 2012. Alpha received statements of Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment. The two focus areas (governance, management and strategy and Certificate in Welding Level 4) were each rated as Excellent for educational performance and Good for capability in self-assessment.

Other: The Alpha campus is located 15 minutes outside of New Plymouth in a small rural township. The head tutor, who is one of the family members, is currently building his family home on the site. At the time of the EER Alpha was completing major renovations to the teaching and main office areas.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER included two focus areas. These were the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy, and the Certificate in Welding (Level 4). This is the only course delivered by Alpha.

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 over one and a half days by two evaluators who visited Alpha at its site in Lepperton, New Plymouth.

The evaluation involved engagement with:

- One of the two directors¹
- Office manager
- The sole tutor
- Five learners from the welding course
- Phone interviews with four stakeholders, all who have hired graduates from Alpha. One of the stakeholders was also a graduate of Alpha and is now a manager for an engineering firm in New Plymouth.

In addition to documents provided for the EER scoping, the EER team sighted and was provided with investment and strategic plans, management and operational policies, quality management system documents, moderation review results², self-assessment documents, and monitoring and programme review data (including results data and stakeholder and learner feedback evaluations).

¹ The two directors are husband and wife. The office manager and sole tutor are daughter and son respectively.

² Moderation review results from the relevant industry training organisations was provided during the EER.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

Key reasons for this judgement include the following:

- Alpha has a clear purpose and direction and clearly demonstrates a commitment to its learners and to the welding industry. The major director of Alpha is heavily involved in standard-setting boards and advisory panels for the welding industry. These roles included governance, policy development and standards-setting.
- Since the previous EER, Alpha has maintained a consistent level of high learner achievement, further reinforcing the effectiveness of the sole tutor, the work environment and the specific type of pastoral care and support provided to welding learners. In addition, Alpha offers an internationally recognised qualification as a supplement to its certificate, giving learners more options for employment outside of New Zealand.
- Alpha has strong industry and stakeholder connections, particularly with employers. Feedback from employers of established and sunrise industries spoke highly of the quality of training provided by Alpha and the positive work ethic of graduate learners. Alpha is regarded as one of the preferred training providers for welding in the region, with the TEC deciding to offer more EFTS in 2016.
- Alpha provides a well-resourced learning environment located in a purpose-built engineering workshop. Its co-location with the sole tutor's highly successful engineering business, separate to the PTE, provides learners with an opportunity to experience working in a real workshop to gain valuable work experience.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Alpha Training and Development Centre**.

Key reasons for this judgement include the following:

- Alpha demonstrates a high level of administrative efficiency and systemisation relevant to its single focused programme and small learner numbers. The PTE has efficient systems based on sound policies and procedures. These ensure a good level of consistency in training practice, active assessment of achievement data, and reporting to NZQA.
- Strong industry connections are maintained using formal and informal strategies that enable Alpha to receive ongoing feedback about the quality of training delivered, the progress of learners who have graduated from Alpha, and any industry trends that may be happening that will have an impact on training outcomes.
- To a lesser extent, Alpha employs learner and stakeholder evaluation surveys with varying degrees of success. While Alpha analyses these surveys, the quick, face-to-face discussions during 'tool-box meetings' and the close proximity of the administration office to the workshop provide Alpha with a more effective way of gathering data that is relevant and can be addressed and actioned immediately.

Findings³

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**.

Achievement outcomes for learners studying at Alpha are high. Table 1 shows that before Alpha's first EER in 2012, course and qualification completions based on TEC educational performance indicator (EPI)⁴ data were high and indicated an improving trend. The results for 2013 and 2014 (after the 2012 EER) demonstrate that Alpha has consistently maintained these levels of achievement. Interim achievement data gathered during this evaluation indicates that the 2015 results will be similar.

Table 1. Rates of completion (courses and qualifications), retentions, repeats and progression to higher study

| Chosen focus area for the EER | Certificate in Welding (Level 4) | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | 2011 (%) | 2012 (%) | 2013 (%) | 2104 (%) |
| Course completions | 93 | 96 | 97 | 95 |
| Qualification completions | 93 | 85 | 94 | 85 |
| Higher study at level 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Retentions | 90 | 81 | 88 | 91 |

Source: Data supplied by Alpha Training from TEC EPI data

Table 2. Māori and Pasifika* rates of completion (courses and qualifications), retentions, repeats and progression to higher study

| Chosen focus area for the EER | National Certificate in Welding (Level 4) | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------|----------|----------|
| | 2011 (%) | 2012 (%) | 2013 (%) | 2104 (%) |
| Course completions | 85 (0) | 100 (100) | 83 (0) | 74 (100) |
| Qualification completions | 100 (0) | 100 (100) | 67 (0) | 50 (100) |
| Higher study at level 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Retentions | 86 (0) | 67 (100) | 100 (0) | 67 (100) |

*Results in brackets denote Pasifika learners

Source: Data supplied by Alpha Training from EPI data

³ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

⁴ In the absence of specific welding data to compare against, Alpha made the decision to use the TEC EPI data as a measure of learner success.

Table 2 shows that achievement rates for Māori dropped in 2013 and 2014, while Pasifika rates in 2012 and 2014 were high. Alpha is aware of the drop in Māori course and qualification completions and said that the low numbers of both Māori and Pasifika enrolled with Alpha tends to distort the figures if one withdraws from the programme. Alpha is managing the small number of Māori learners who may struggle and has offered more frequent one-to-one sessions.

In addition to learners receiving the level 4 certificate qualification, their work is also submitted for the AS/NZS 2980 welding qualification.⁵ Alpha records indicate that learners who have qualified for the certificate all met the standards required for the AS/NZS 2980 qualification. The significance of this qualification for learners is that not only is it recognised by industry, it is also recognised in Australia. Learners interviewed for the EER said they were looking at employment prospects in Australia because of the lack of jobs available in the region.

In addition to gaining welding qualifications, learners indicated through feedback and post-course evaluation surveys that the qualification almost guaranteed them employment, where available. Learners also said they acquired a range of relevant workplace skills and an improved work ethic that they could add to their work experience to offer employers.

Because there is a lack of similar welding training providers to use as a benchmark⁶, Alpha uses its extensive industry networks as a source of feedback for assessing how well learners are progressing in the industry. The head tutor gathers both formal and informal feedback by way of stakeholder evaluations and personal conversations with employers who have employed Alpha graduates. The tutor is able to quickly gain information about the graduates' performance at their new job as well as information about the relevance to employers of the skills learners are taught at Alpha. Given the small numbers enrolled, this method of assessing the progress of learner graduates and collecting information is more than sufficient.

⁵ AS/NZS is a qualification test for the welding of steels to the requirements of a welding procedure specification. It is external to the qualifications on the NZQF. The qualification is recognised in both Australia and New Zealand.

⁶ Alpha used the local polytechnic as a comparison provider and considers its own programme and teaching methods far superior; a number of the polytechnic's learners have enrolled with Alpha. The polytechnic recently announced it will not offer this subject in 2016.

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**.

The consistently high completion rates for the welding certificate, together with the industry-recognised AS/NZS 2980 qualification, provides strong evidence that learners derive much value from those qualifications. They also view the qualification as almost a guarantee of employment. The high proportion of industry employers hiring Alpha graduates, and consistent phone requests from local employers to Alpha inquiring after graduates and students who have almost completed their qualification, further reinforces that belief. The recognition of the AS/NZS 2980 qualification in Australia is an added bonus for learners, particularly those considering a move to Australia.

Consistent comments from employers of Alpha graduates having a good work ethic, being work-ready and possessing the required welding skills demonstrates that Alpha is regarded as a highly reputable trainer of welders. One employer, who has established a new business in the region and is marketing nationally and internationally, commented that Alpha was providing a credible and qualified workforce for a 'sunrise industry'.

Prior to the evaluation, the TEC offered Alpha additional EFTS (i.e. funded students) because the local polytechnic is not offering the welding programme in 2016. This offer is a validation of Alpha's training and that the PTE can deliver on its stated outcomes of producing suitably qualified welders.

Alpha has established strong relationships with stakeholders both regionally and nationally. Alpha regularly seeks feedback from employers, industry groups and learners to determine how much the training and outcomes are valued. Alpha said it found face-to-face contact and quick conversations over the phone to be the most effective way of seeking feedback from employers. Given the size of the organisation and the long-established relationships with key stakeholders, this way of gathering information is more than sufficient for Alpha to understand how well stakeholders value the outcomes of the training.

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**.

Alpha's plan for learner success is simple and effective. It has one programme, a structured approach to identifying learner needs, a good understanding of industry requirements for the qualification, and a clear pathway to ensure programme delivery matches learner-identified needs.

Alpha's open enrolment process allows for the sole tutor to work with small groups at the beginning of the teaching year and to initially immerse them in the theory phase of the programme, prior to the practical phase. When subsequent enrolments occur, they are introduced to the theory phase while the first group of learners should have moved on or are in the process of moving to the practical assignments. This process provides flexibility for the tutor to work with both the new learners and the current learners as well as providing an environment where the older learners are able to support the new enrolments in both the theory and practical phases. Learners' feedback indicated that they support completing the theory phase first and then the practical training as it complements their growing knowledge.

The tutor operates a separate engineering business which is co-located with the PTE. Welding tasks within that business are offered to learners who have shown excellent progress during the programme. This activity is intended to demonstrate to learners how an engineering firm operates and how their skills can be used, and to offer an incentive to learners who excel during the programme.

Alpha use a range of methods to ensure that its programme matches learner needs. These include learner evaluation feedback, employer feedback, and monitoring of learner outcomes throughout the programme. One specific method that has been effective for Alpha is the use of toolbox meetings. Similar to a normal work environment, the meetings involve group discussions between the tutor and the learners. Discussions include learners' progress and any issues that may be occurring. The significance of these meetings is that they are held in the workspace and are confined mainly to the contexts of the programme. Learners get to experience for a short time what it is like to be open and frank in a real workshop. For Alpha, the meetings give them frank, up-to-date information about the learners' progress. The high learner achievement rates in both the level 4 programme and the AS/NZS2980 qualification is sufficient proof that the programme and activities match the needs of learners.

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 **Excellent**.

The teaching practice at Alpha is highly effective. There was clear evidence that the sole tutor has extensive industry knowledge and experience and has an effective approach to teaching the programme content. This was validated by key employer stakeholders who have employed Alpha graduates and consider the training at Alpha to be of an exceptionally high standard.

The teaching environment is reminiscent of an on-the-job (old-school) workshop delivery. Learners are given opportunities to practise their skills in a workshop and are often encouraged to test themselves and make mistakes in a safe space. Learners felt that being able to challenge their skills and learn from their mistakes and have these corrected by the tutor helped reconfirm their learning.

The tutor is also providing a range of welding-related opportunities for learners to gain practical experience in a safe, purpose-built workshop. These include learners having the use of high-quality and up-to-date welding equipment, gaining work experience in a fully operational engineering firm, and having access to new industry-related information through Alpha's association with the HERA-ANB Board.⁷

The decision by Alpha to initially teach all the theory components and then transition learners into the practical aspects of the programme provides greater management flexibility for the tutor as well as ensuring short waiting times for learners who have to share some of the welding equipment.⁸ The low numbers on the programme enable the tutor to deliver the programme this way and manage effectively the workflow and the monitoring of learners in the workshop. At the time of the EER, a decision to accept the TEC offer of additional EFTS had not been made by Alpha. Should it accept the offer, Alpha will need to give consideration to the likely implications. These will include a requirement for extra tutors, resourcing equipment and configuring workshop space.

Learner achievement, as noted above, is consistently high. Learner evaluation feedback indicates high satisfaction with the teaching, and the positive feedback provider by employers about the training and inquiries regarding prospective graduates, provides sufficient evidence to show Alpha is effectively monitoring its

⁷ The managing director of Alpha is a member of the governing board of HERA (Heavy Engineering Research Association) ANB. HERA-ANB is the authorised national body for the certification of welders.

⁸ The workspace allows for new learners to concentrate on theory work and the older learners to be engaged in practical activities. This provides for an even spread of activities throughout the workshop.

teaching delivery. In addition, consistently positive external moderation reports provide validation of Alpha's assessment decisions.

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**.

As a small, family-run PTE, Alpha exhibits strong family values of leadership, respect, caring for people and inclusivity. These values are strongly embedded into the supportive learning environment of Alpha and are contributing factors to the consistent learner achievement.

The management of administration is comprehensive and clear. At enrolment all applicants have an interview with the administration manager and/or the tutor. In some cases, Alpha will assist the learner to complete any necessary financial matters related to the programme, including assistance with StudyLink. An assessment is also made of the learner's prior learning experience and levels of literacy and numeracy in relation to the level of the qualification. If literacy and numeracy issues are identified, Alpha is able to put appropriate plans and measures into place, including close monitoring and adaptation of assessment tasks, for the tutor to address.⁹ The small numbers of learners on the programme enables the tutor to operate this way and for the administrator to have a closer relationship with learner welfare. This demonstrates the strong family values employed by Alpha and is important in the context of the guidance and support the PTE provides to show commitment to the learners.

Closer to completion of the programme, the tutor sources employment opportunities for learners. This enables him to keep in touch with stakeholders and the state of industry.

In addition to learner satisfaction evaluations, Alpha employs a much less formal approach to getting the views of the learners about the guidance and support provided. The tool box meetings ensure that issues are raised in a safe environment and, more importantly, have them addressed almost immediately. The flexible enrolment system employed by Alpha means that the tutor and administration manager do not have an influx of the same issues at once and are able to successfully manage the types and levels of support required by the learners. As noted, consistently high learner achievement, including successful post-programme employment, shows there are no issues in performance and with the effectiveness of self-assessment.

⁹ Learners identified with literacy and numeracy issues are put through the online literacy and assessment. In most cases, Alpha has found few issues relating to literacy and numeracy with learners enrolling in the welding programme.

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 **Excellent**.

The governance and management of Alpha is highly effective. The PTE has a clear purpose and direction of providing a welding workforce that is qualified and work-ready. A contributing factor to the PTE's effectiveness is how it has positioned itself in the welding industry. The managing director has been at the forefront, contributing to advancing the development of welding through associations and membership on a number of welding and industry-related boards and advisory panels. Some of the panel members have major connections with international organisations in the welding and engineering fields. These connections provide Alpha with up-to-date information about welding as well as exposing Alpha to major industry trends. Alpha is able to apply these to their programme and in some cases validate what is being delivered.

With a small scale operation, Alpha is able to make significant strategic and operational changes with minimal delay. Some decisions include cutting back on enrolments to adjust to funding cuts. One of the major funding cuts was the loss of the contract to train and qualify enough learners to fill the shortfall of workers in Christchurch for the earthquake rebuild. Operational decisions include resourcing the workshop with new and updated equipment. The intent of this is to ensure learners are able to work on equipment they are likely to encounter in the industry today. Resourcing also goes towards supplying the necessary safety equipment for working in the workshop and which the learners are able to take to any future employment.

The subject of succession planning was raised by the evaluation team, particularly with the mature-age directors. The tutor and administrator have only recently been made directors of Alpha, with the intent of taking over the PTE from their parents. Alpha has not yet made any firm decisions on how the PTE will be configured if and when the current directors retire. The evaluation team suggested that this matter should be given due consideration and priority as a future strategic decision.

The evaluation team sighted a number of recent Alpha Board meeting minutes, HERA board minutes, quality assurance review reports and a number of learner and stakeholder evaluation feedback forms. All these reports indicate that Alpha is regularly monitoring learner achievement data and reporting these back in a formal setting. The small, family nature of the PTE means business decisions are made quickly and actioned almost immediately. These activities provide sufficient evidence for the evaluation to conclude that governance and management support for learners is effective.

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 **Excellent**.

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 **Excellent**.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

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

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

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

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz