

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Ag Challenge Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 26 January 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.....	6
Summary of Results	7
Findings	10
Recommendations	20
Appendix	21

MoE Number: 9294
NZQA Reference: C05685
Date of EER visit: 6 and 7 October 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:	248 Hill Street, Whanganui
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1993
Number of students:	Domestic: 135 equivalent full-time students, 207 Gateway, and 67 STAR secondary school students International: nil
Number of staff:	12 full-time equivalents, five part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	Trade skills training, automotive/engineering and carpentry, agricultural skills, Ag Challenge Certificate in Carpentry (Level 4), National Certificate in Agriculture (Levels 1-4), National Certificate in Dairy Farming (Milking) (Level 3), National Certificate in Agriculture (Cattle Breeding) (Level 3), National Certificate in Agriculture (Animal Handling and Breeding) (Level 3), National Certificate in Building, Construction and Allied Trades Skills (Levels 1-2), National Certificate in Veterinary Nursing (Level 5).
Sites:	35 Sommes Road, Whanganui No 3 Line, RD 12, Whanganui
Distinctive characteristics:	Ag Challenge Limited currently delivers 12 programmes of 13 to 44 weeks duration at levels 1-5 including Youth Training, Work Based Training, and Training For Work. All courses are based around unit standards

which, when clustered together, staircase towards national certificates.

Ag Challenge delivers training in agriculture and agribusiness management, automotive /engineering, building and construction, and veterinary nursing through eight funding streams.

Over 100 of the students are funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The remainder are funded by the Agriculture Industry Training Organisation (AgITO), Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre, Training For You (equine training, agriculture and automotive for Jump-Start programme), YMCA (Ag Challenge train YMCA funded students in automotive /engineering), and the Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation (BCITO).

The TEO has chosen not to focus on Pasifika learners as recent research has identified that over the last four years this group has made up only 4 per cent of Ag Challenge's student population.

Recent significant changes: Ag Challenge restructured itself over 2008-2011. Two months prior to the EER, a new agriculture head of department was appointed while the previous head has continued employment as a tutor. Previously, Ag Challenge appointed an education coordinator to look at the operational and strategic provision of the company and set up an academic board to provide advice and recommendations to management on course changes to assist in monitoring moderation activities to ensure academic integrity of courses, and to look at course and student performance.

Previous quality assurance history: At its previous NZQA quality assurance visit, which was a quality audit in 2007, the PTE substantially met the requirements of the standard that was the basis for ongoing registration at the time. The two requirements not met related to assessment and moderation. The main reason for these requirements not being met was insufficient detail in the quality management system procedures to ensure that all tasks were implemented accurately and consistently.

A TEC audit of Ag Challenge in June 2011

identified a number of issues. In response, Ag Challenge submitted an action plan to the TEC, with the TEC requesting a follow-up plan on actions that had not yet been implemented, plus revised policies and procedures relating to the findings, as per the audit report. The TEC has accepted the Ag Challenge response submitted the week following the EER visit and has closed the audit process.

Ag Challenge has a history of meeting the national external moderation requirements of NZQA, BCITO, and AgITO (but in the latter case not always at its first submissions).

Ag Challenge has no active risk issues.

Ag Challenge has a successful application history with NZQA.

Other:

Ag Challenge has many connections with people in the sectors to which it provides education and training, and who support the TEO and help provide valuable practical experience for its learners.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review included the following focus areas:

- National Certificate in Veterinary Nursing (Level 5). This is the highest-level qualification delivered by Ag Challenge. The programme had 20 students nearing completion at the time of the EER. It is TEC Student Achievement Component (SAC) funded and 36 weeks long.
- Ag Challenge Certificate in Carpentry (Level 4). This is the second highest-level qualification Ag Challenge delivers. The programme had 19 students nearing completion at the time of the EER. It is also TEC SAC-funded and 44 weeks long.
- AgITO-funded agriculture training. This is the most significant of six additional contracts Ag Challenge has undertaken for delivery of training. There were nine learners on this programme at the time of the EER (the AgITO funded a total of 37 in 2011). The programme is 44 weeks long.

The following mandatory focus area was also included:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

The Gateway and STAR programmes were not considered because they are secondary school programmes evaluated by the Education Review Office.

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/>

An NZQA lead evaluator and an external evaluator conducted the evaluation at the TEO's three sites in Whanganui and also visited Bulls where they interviewed some of the agriculture learners. The evaluators met the owner/director/manager, the education coordinator, administration and accounts/finance managers, heads of department/programme managers, academic board representatives, tutors, administrative staff, learners, and a range of other stakeholders.

Documents and information sighted included: self-assessment information; evaluations and feedback; results data; trainee resource handbooks and teaching materials; assessments; tutor workbooks; programme plans and reviews; internal and external moderation reports; governance and management documents; quality management system policies and procedures; and the Ag Challenge website.

Ag Challenge Limited has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and its submissions have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Ag Challenge Limited**.

A high proportion of learners complete their programmes and achieve unit standards and qualifications. For example, of the 20 learners completing the National Certificate in Veterinary Nursing at the time of the visit, the expected success rate was 90 per cent, which is typical of this programme. The achievement rate for the Ag Challenge Certificate in Carpentry was 71 per cent and for the AgITO-funded agriculture training in dairy was over 80 per cent. The carpentry and agriculture rates of success are significant given the history of limited or non-achievement of these learners at secondary school.

Learners gain useful knowledge, understanding, and specific and generic skills. These enable them to gain employment during and/or after completion of their study. Veterinary nursing learners often obtain employment arising from their work placements during their programme, while agriculture trainees funded by AgITO are already employed. A small proportion of learners also go on to further study.

Learners are motivated because they are studying the subjects they want to. They gain self-confidence and a sense of well-being. In some cases, they learn self-discipline and respect which enables them to move from being unemployable to becoming successfully employed, and some advance to senior supervisory positions. Such personal growth not only benefits them personally but also their communities, families/whānau, and iwi as the case may be. They apply what they have learned to the workplace, their own lives, and the lives of others. The EER team heard numerous examples of such outcomes from learners which were confirmed by the tutors and stakeholders including employers.

Ag Challenge and TEC data shows that in 2010 the TEC Student Achievement Component (SAC) funded course completion rate was 71 per cent compared with the national median of 81 per cent, but the completion rate was 74 per cent compared with the national median of 75 percent. The retention rate was 69 per cent which is the same as the national median. Ag Challenge and TEC data also shows that the proportion of learners under 25 is significant but has fluctuated over the past three or four years. However, Ag Challenge remains committed to increasing the numbers of young people who achieve qualifications at levels 4 and above. The course completion rates for under-25s reduced from 84 per cent in 2008 to 74 per cent and continued to reduce to 72 per cent in 2010, whereas the qualification completions increased in 2010. Māori participation has increased each year and Māori course and qualifications rates increased in 2010. The organisation has chosen not to focus on Pasifika learners as recent research has identified that over the last four years this group has made up only 4 per cent of the student population. Most significantly, the success rate in achieving employment or

going on to further study has increased from 42 per cent to 71 per cent over the last three years.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Ag Challenge Limited**.

Ag Challenge has always self-assessed based on its continuous quality improvement policy and is transitioning to an increasingly more evaluative approach. It gathers quantitative data, which generally also meets the requirements of the funders. Ag Challenge also gathers formal qualitative data through evaluations by learners and tutors in particular. It summarises and discusses such information and uses it to make changes and improvements. Examples of these were evident in governance and management in particular, but also in teaching and learning, and assessment and moderation practice.

Ag Challenge has strong informal and anecdotal evidence of its performance from employers and other stakeholders. The EER team was impressed at how well informed were the ten different stakeholders interviewed. Ag Challenge was readily able to bring together such a group and it liaises with such employers and other stakeholders on an individual basis. The organisation agrees that it could capture valuable informal feedback better and is actively considering how to do this.

Ag Challenge does not appear to have identified as clearly as it might have some issues around the collection and recording of results data and assessment and moderation. The TEC audit and AgITO have identified these areas, and Ag Challenge is making improvements in them and using self-assessment to evaluate their effectiveness. Assessment and internal moderation provide useful feedback on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning as well as on assessment and moderation practice. While Ag Challenge meets the moderation requirements of external standard-setting bodies such as NZQA and industry training organisations, it has begun to maximise the internal processes that contribute to this through increasing the participation of all staff in internal moderation. This is already providing an example of how Ag Challenge can be more proactive rather than reactive in identifying changes and ensuring greater success with its external moderation at the first submission.

Ag Challenge self-assessment includes weekly departmental meetings and regular programme reports as well as investment planning and programme reviews at least twice-yearly in addition to regular, ongoing meetings of tutors, staff, and management. Ag Challenge is continuing to improve the regular and ongoing practice of self-assessment. An example of this is the introduction of brief Positive/Negative/Interesting (PNI) reports are conducted between staff and students fortnightly. While the future of this practice was not entirely clear at the time of the EER visit, it is one example of how such innovations can contribute to further developing what is becoming an increasingly self-evaluative culture within Ag Challenge, which will enhance its success.

TEO response

Ag Challenge has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

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**.

Eighteen of the 20 learners completing their National Certificate in Veterinary Nursing at the time of the EER visit were expected to successfully complete their qualification. The two learners not expected to complete have personal barriers to learning that they have not been able to overcome sufficiently during the course, but they should still achieve the level 2 qualification from the programme. A success rate of 80 per cent or higher is typical of this programme for Ag Challenge.

Most, but not all, of the carpentry learners had come straight from school. Most had already completed their level 2 qualification at Ag Challenge or elsewhere. Ag Challenge and most learners themselves expected that they would achieve their Ag Challenge Certificate in Carpentry despite the challenges of passing the theory assessments. Such achievement is significant because most of these learners did not engage during their secondary education and have a history of very little or no achievement.

Four of the nine agricultural dairy learners interviewed by the EER team had already achieved or were about to achieve their level 4 qualification. They had already completed their level 4 stage 1 and, in some cases previously, level 2. Again, such achievement is significant as these learners' achievement at school ranged from NCEA level 2, including literacy and numeracy, to, in one or two cases, no qualification.

Ag Challenge and TEC data shows that in 2010 the TEC Student Achievement Component (SAC) funded course completion rate was 71 per cent. This compared with the national median of 81 per cent, but the qualifications completion rate was 74 per cent compared with the national median of 75 per cent. The retention rate was 69 per cent, which is the same as the national median. The programmes reviewed reflected Ag Challenge and TEC data that show the proportion of learners under 25 is significant but has fluctuated over the past three years. Ag Challenge is committed to increasing the numbers of young people who achieve qualifications at level 4 and above. Youth programme numbers dropped dramatically, to 11 in 2010 from 30 in 2009, but have since stabilised. The course completion and qualification achievement rates meet or exceed the expectations of the funders, the TEC and AgITO. Māori participation and course and qualification completions have increased each year over the past three years and are now similar to, or better than,

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

those for non-Māori. The organisation has chosen not to focus on Pasifika learners as recent research has identified that over the past four years this group made up only 4 per cent of the student population. Most significantly, the success rate in achieving employment (or going on to further study) has increased from 42 per cent to 71 per cent over the last three years.

The achievements of Ag Challenge learners is aided by the tracking and monitoring conducted by the learners themselves, their tutors, heads of department/programme managers, the academic committee, and governance and management. Ag Challenge records where its learners gain employment, as it is required to do by the TEC. It is also aware of the destinations of most learners long after the mandatory three months they are obliged to report to the TEC. If Ag Challenge were to capture and record this information more systematically, it would have an even fuller picture of how well its learners achieve.

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

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

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

The knowledge, understanding, and specific and generic skills that learners gain result in them becoming more employable. Their awareness of theory and the experience of how it applies in practice contribute to making them work-ready (if they are not already in employment as is the case with the AgITO-funded trainees). Their learning also develops and enhances their future employment prospects, including enabling learners to go on to further education and training. The period of study helps clarify the role learners want in veterinary nursing or carpentry or agriculture. The work ethic they learn stands the learners in good stead regardless of the type of employment they take up after completing their programmes. Such learners shift from being unemployable to becoming successfully employed and sometimes gaining senior supervisory positions.

The extent of the direct value of the outcomes of the education and training is reflected in the many stories Ag Challenge and its learners, tutors, and stakeholders shared with the EER team. These included a graduate veterinary nurse teaching experienced industry employees a better way of bandaging (and why), a Māori learner who “found” himself again through carpentry and whose first priority was to upgrade his mother’s house, and dairy graduates who had become sharemilkers.

Learners gain self-confidence and a sense of well-being. According to the tutors, employers, and learners themselves, in some cases they learn discipline and self-discipline, self-respect, and respect for others. The learners take pride in being able to show others what they have done, for example what they have built as part of their carpentry training. Such personal growth not only benefits the learners personally, but also their communities, families/whānau, and iwi as the case might

be, through applying what they have learned to the workplace, their own lives, and the lives of others. The EER team heard numerous examples of such outcomes from learners, which were confirmed by their tutors and stakeholders alike.

Ag Challenge, its learners, tutors, and stakeholders such as employers are well aware of the value of the outcomes of the education and training to learners and stakeholders. The organisation has immediate destinational data and informal anecdotal information. As part of relatively small, close-knit communities, graduates are usually well known, and information on how well they are getting on is readily available and accessible. This includes, for example, updates on the whereabouts of veterinary nursing graduates at conferences and through emails, texts, phone calls, and visiting veterinary practice representatives. Such information could be even better and more formally captured than at present and used to gain additional information about the extent of the achievements of learners and the value of the outcomes over time. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as alumni, are worth considering as possible ways to do this.

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**.

Programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders well. The teaching combines theory and practice in such a way that each informs and contributes to the other. For example, the veterinary nursing training takes place in an actual veterinary clinic environment, where all aspects of veterinary services take place. These include surgery, postmortems, retail services, and observation and training by practising veterinarians as well as the tutors. Placements in other veterinary clinics and other providers of animal care give learners a wide experience of their chosen field of study and practice and often result in employment after they complete their training. Activities such as regular field trips to different relevant environments further enhance trainees' experience, knowledge, and understanding of their sector and the range of employment opportunities it offers.

The carpentry training programme progresses the trainees from building outdoor furniture to building houses which are officially inspected at the three stages of construction to ensure compliance with the relevant building codes. Other stakeholders such as suppliers are also involved which contributes to the knowledge and understanding of the learners. Trainees learn in a deliberate and flexible environment but are well aware that there will be more pressure on the job. Theory is learned in an applied practice environment which learners praised as helping them to understand the theory of their practice much better than some previous experiences.

The dairy trainees are able to directly apply their knowledge, understanding, and skills because they are already in employment. For example, feed budgeting is applied to the particular place they are working on and the students have helped the tutor develop a mathematical template which everyone can use. The practical emphasis includes animal management and animal welfare and care which trainees learn requires skill, not strength, when managing a heavy and strong beast.

The needs of all learners are diagnosed and addressed from the start of each programme and thereafter during it. This includes literacy and numeracy and styles of learning which the veterinary nursing team intends to further formalise as part of the pre-entry requirements from 2012. The attitudes of carpentry and agricultural learners, as well as any barriers to learning, are identified and addressed at pre-entry and the outset of their training. Agricultural stakeholders such as employers and suppliers observed that the quality of trainees has improved over time and that they are better prepared and more able than previously. This improvement was attributed to factors that include better assessment of needs before, at the start of, and during programmes prior to the trainees beginning to work on farms.

Programmes are reported regularly and reviewed at least every two years. Head of department/programme manager reports are provided to management on a much more regular basis. Changes are made more often based on learner, tutor, and stakeholder feedback which helps ensure the programmes are relevant to industry, stakeholders, and communities. These changes include the balance and timing of teaching and learning and assessment. All programmes are delivered as much as possible according to industry and personal circumstances. This particularly applies to agriculture where programmes are run according to the seasons, such as calving, when learners are unavailable for much class time but when they can best apply some of their knowledge and understanding. For veterinary nursing (which also has de-stress activities for learners) it also applies to peak seasons in areas such as neutering animals. In carpentry, building a house is to some extent weather-dependent which affects the opportunity to learn and apply theory. Matching learner needs also includes support with, or provision of, transport.

Again, information about how well programmes and activities match the needs of learners and stakeholders over time, in addition to at the time of training, could be even better and more formally captured than presently. This would provide useful additional information, which could lead to further improvements.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Learning environments in all programmes reviewed were planned and structured through detailed course and programme plans, which still address the needs of the learners and are based on addressing their needs and well-being. Policies, procedures, and practices are focused on addressing and minimising barriers to learning, such as analysing different styles of learning and literacy and numeracy. Ag Challenge evaluations confirmed by the EER team showed that, generally, the workbooks and other resources as well as assessment materials are accessible to the learners.

Learners consistently spoke about the inclusiveness of their learning environment and how their resources, tutors, and learning activities effectively engaged them in their learning. They appreciated the many opportunities to apply their theory, knowledge, and skills in a variety of genuine practical contexts. The monitoring and tracking of their progress, the explanations and mentoring of their tutors, their individual diaries/logs and individual action plans that are regularly reviewed with their tutors, contribute to their individual progress and also help ensure learners are at a similar point in their learning. So too do formal progress letters, as in veterinary nursing.

The teachers relate well to each other and are collegial in their teaching practice. This was evident even when management roles changed and staff continued to work closely together in their new roles. The teachers and learners relate well to each other, as do the learners who also help each other.

Learners reported that they were much more engaged and focused than when they were at school. They observed that they were treated with respect and were doing what they wanted to do and learn about. Some of them were able to compare their experience and the resources at Ag Challenge favourably with other private training establishments and polytechnics.

Tutors have considerable industry experience, and this supports effective teaching and practice. For example, carpentry learners reported that they could understand mathematics much better now than at school. They said this was because the resources and their tutors integrated and embedded mathematics within the practical work which motivated them to understand and apply their knowledge and understanding.

Ag Challenge does not appear to have identified as clearly as it might have some issues around the collection and recording of results data and assessment and moderation. The TEC audit and AgITO respectively have identified these areas and Ag Challenge is making improvements in them using self-assessment to evaluate their effectiveness. These include assessment and moderation practice.

Assessment practice is valid and fair and provides learners and tutors with useful feedback on progress, which supports successful achievement. Oral assessment or reassessment is used where appropriate. Further teaching and learning interventions take place prior to reassessment as necessary. Assessment and internal moderation provide useful feedback on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning as well as on assessment and moderation practice. While Ag Challenge eventually meets the moderation requirements of external standard-setting bodies such as NZQA and industry training organisations, it has begun to improve the internal processes that contribute to this through increasing the participation of all staff in internal moderation. This could also include using the considerable experience and national role of the veterinary nursing programme manager for the benefit of all programmes across the whole organisation.

Ag Challenge gathers quantitative and qualitative data through its evaluations from learners and tutors in particular. These now include mid- as well as end-of-programme evaluations, which enable the TEO to make improvements earlier than previously. The introduction of the use of PNI is also intended to support such responsiveness. Ag Challenge summarises and discusses such information and uses it to make changes and improvements, for example in governance and management in particular, but also in teaching and learning.

Self-assessment does not appear to have identified professional development areas for improvement as clearly as it might. Most, but not all, staff are well qualified and experienced in adult teaching and learning, assessment and moderation, and literacy and numeracy. Some performance appraisals are currently on hold because of recent restructuring and changes to positions. However, Ag Challenge's identification of the need to carry out at least two literacy and numeracy assessments using the TEC progressions tool will benefit the current and future progress of learners who continue to need to minimise this barrier to their ongoing learning.

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**.

Learners are well guided and supported from pre-enrolment through to the enrolment and interview process that identifies learner needs, which are then addressed by Ag Challenge. Initial screening includes establishing whether the learner is committed to studying and gaining employment in the industry they have chosen. It also includes determining the likelihood of those with a criminal record gaining employment or holding particular roles, which sometimes leads to referring them back to Work and Income or the Ministry of Social Development.

Ag Challenge addresses the needs of the whole learner. This means helping them if they have barriers to learning such as literacy and numeracy, problems with attendance or punctuality, or challenges with developing a work ethic. Tutors help

learners develop, and implement and regularly review their individual action plans which track and monitor their progress. Learners, tutors, heads of department/ programme managers, stakeholders including employers and suppliers, industry training advisers, and governance and management all contribute to monitoring individual progress.

Tutors are always available for one-to-one mentoring and support before, during, and after class without adversely affecting other learners. Learners also help and support each other, and professional experience and expertise is always available through the tutors themselves and/or practising veterinarians, as well as from builders, suppliers, farmers, or others who provide work experience. Learners have accessible resources and workbooks which they can refer to at any time and which support learning and assessment on the job.

Ag Challenge maintains contact with learners when they are on placement or work experience or in employment. It is aware of the workload and workflow challenges learners face, whether during their class programmes or off-site, and is responsive to them. For example, this has resulted in continuing the emphasis on studying the heart as a fundamental part of the initial veterinary nursing training and referring back to it as relevant and necessary subsequently. Ag Challenge adjusts the structure, number, and timeframe for the completion of assessments during the programme, especially when trainees are on their placements. In carpentry, trainees have the assurance of the quality of their work from the three inspections at different stages of the building of houses. Agricultural learners are not required to attend class during particular seasons, such as calving, when they are required full-time on their farms. Learners' interests are also represented through their student council and its interactions with governance and management.

Self-assessment on how well learners are guided and supported is based on learner, tutor, stakeholder, and employer ongoing, informal feedback as well as formal learner, tutor, and heads of department/programme manager evaluations and reports. The evaluations are summarised and discussed and used to make improvements such as those referred to earlier in this section. However, the informal feedback could be better captured and recorded which would further enhance the effectiveness of the information and support ongoing changes and improvements and the evaluation of their effectiveness.

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**.

The purpose and direction of Ag Challenge is clear. It is committed to doing the very best for the quite diverse range of trainees, addressing their needs and achieving worthwhile outcomes for them, their respective stakeholders, and their communities. The leadership is effective, based on ongoing development and improvement, including a restructuring of management.

The education coordinator (a relatively recent new position) has addressed a number of important areas including educational performance, business strategy, and how to deal with the consequences of reduced funding. Early indications are that a recent change in the role of agriculture head of department/programme manager appears to have been successful and has resulted in the strengths of two experienced staff being utilised where they will be most effective. The strategic plan for 2012 shows educational and business acumen in its intention to combine trades and carpentry to maximise the strengths of both. A period of consolidation may also be helpful in the ever-changing tertiary education and funding environment.

Ag Challenge has sound relationships with its internal and external partners. This includes its relationship with the level 5 veterinary nursing programme and Wanganui Veterinary Services where the training takes place. Ag Challenge provides the funding, reporting, and administrative support as well as managing interactions with NZQA when needed. This allows the tutors to focus on teaching, learning, and assessment in an authentic community-of-practice environment. Building houses that trainees can proudly refer to after they have been externally signed off is a highly effective practice. Training the staff of its main supplier and meeting their needs benefits the supplier and Ag Challenge. The owner/managing director has a network of many contacts in agriculture in particular. This enables Ag Challenge to provide opportunities in agriculture similar to those in veterinary nursing and carpentry. The managing director is aware of potential conflicts of interest and manages the situation so that policies and practices are consistently legal and ethical. Ag Challenge is aware that it always needs to ensure that all the parties that it contracts fulfil their responsibilities.

The recruitment of staff is effective. This is important given the organisation's quite high turnover, for which there is a variety of reasons. However, Ag Challenge does not appear to have any problem appointing suitably industry-experienced tutors. It values its staff and supports staff professional development although, as already referred to earlier in this report, it could further develop this area. Ag Challenge provides sufficient and adequate resources, which support effective learning and teaching. Its evaluations, confirmed by the EER team, verified this.

Ag Challenge has continued to anticipate and respond effectively to change, but further development of its self-assessment, which is in transition, would contribute further to this. The organisation already gathers information effectively, which it uses to understand educational performance and bring about useful improvements. However, there are areas that it could develop further. These include capturing the wealth of informal and anecdotal feedback and using assessment and moderation and performance appraisal feedback more routinely at all levels across all areas. Initiatives such as the PNI and regular programme reports show that the TEO wishes to ensure that its self-assessment is increasingly systematic, coherent, and ongoing. This will enable Ag Challenge to become more proactive and less reactive in the challenging environment in which it operates.

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 in Veterinary Nursing (Level 5)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Ag Challenge Certificate in Carpentry (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**.

2.4 Focus area: AgITO-funded agriculture training

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

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 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 non-university 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).

*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-eeer/introduction/>*

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz