

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Opus International Consultants
Environmental Training Centre

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 7 December 2010

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Location:	Seaview, Lower Hutt
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1994
Number of students:	Domestic: approximately 150 enrolled during the year
Number of staff:	13
Scope of active accreditation:	Current courses offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swimming Pool Water Treatment• Wastewater Treatment• Water Supply System Disinfection• Water Treatment, levels 1-3 Courses lead to the following qualifications: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Certificate in Water Reticulation (Service Person) (Level 3)• National Certificate in Water Reticulation (Supervisor) (Level 4)• Certificate in Wastewater Treatment (Site Operator) (Level 3)• Certificate in Water Treatment (Site Operator) (Level 3)• Diploma in Drinking Water - treatment (Technician) (Level 5)• Diploma in Wastewater Treatment (Site Technician) (Level 5) Trainees complete qualifications on the job.
Sites:	Lower Hutt

Distinctive characteristics:	Opus International Consultants Environmental Training Centre (Opus ETC) courses lead to qualifications recognised for working in the water industry. Trainees either enrol via the relevant industry training organisation (ITO) or directly with Opus ETC. Many courses require evidence collection in the workplace, demonstrating competency, to complete the qualifications. Opus ETC is part of the New Zealand division of an international company, with its head office based in Malaysia.
Recent significant changes:	Not applicable.
Previous quality assurance history:	Opus ETC did not meet three requirements at the previous quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in 2008. These requirements were in relation to timely provision of financial information, and assessment and moderation.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of Opus International Consultants Environmental Training Centre (Opus ETC) included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

The following courses were selected as focus areas because the organisation has made changes to the content and delivery and they represent the most frequent training delivered by Opus ETC:

- Swimming Pool Water Treatment
- National Certificate in Water Reticulation (Service Person) (Level 3).

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/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

Prior to the external evaluation and review visit, Opus ETC submitted a self-assessment summary outlining the organisation's training and review activities, including review findings and actions. The external evaluation and review team spent two days at the Lower Hutt site, which encompasses the head office and teaching classrooms.

During the visit, the evaluation team met with the training manager, tutors, administration staff, and trainees currently enrolled on the swimming pool water treatment course. While on site, the evaluation team viewed the key documents, including individual trainee results and course documents.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Opus International Consultants Environmental Training Centre**.

The organisation's training is highly valued as it provides courses that lead to a range of qualifications required by council workers and consultants in the water industry. The training provides people working in the water industry with the knowledge required to maintain safe water for recreational and domestic use. Employer feedback provides evidence that courses increase trainees' understanding and improve workplace practices.

Opus ETC's programmes and activities match the needs of industry and trainees. The staff are actively involved in providing input to ITOs and other industry associations such as Water New Zealand and Standards New Zealand, which helps to ensure that course content and structure are aligned to current industry standards. Opus ETC provides short courses spread over a few months or a year to meet trainee and employer workplace requirements.

A high percentage (over 90 per cent) of trainees achieve qualifications each year. However, the data for this outcome is taken from the total number of credits and qualifications achieved per year for each course rather than by monitoring the individual trainee qualification achievement rates for each course. This makes it difficult to determine how many trainees complete a qualification or how long it takes trainees to complete a qualification, to help identify trends in completions or whether the training is successful.

Trainees receive some post-course support to help them complete workplace evidence requirements. However, more immediate post-course follow-up, together with identification of individual needs at enrolment, could help reduce any barriers to completion, in particular for diploma trainees.

Opus ETC could benefit from developing a training strategy with training activities aligned to clear, specific training outcomes to monitor how well trainees are doing on each course, and to provide information on overall qualifications completions.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Opus International Consultants Environmental Training Centre**.

Opus ETC has historically made relevant improvements as a result of its comprehensive, ongoing self-assessment activity. A recent review of courses covered a wide range of activities and identified a need for more standard lesson planning between tutors and for more consistency of assessment outcomes. New processes implemented for reviewing delivery and assessment outcomes would provide better information for review of teaching and assessment activities to ensure there is consistency between tutors and across courses.

The organisation has good processes for ensuring that its programmes and activities match the needs of industry and the relevant ITO, but is less effective in identifying trainees'

needs to assist them to complete course requirements following attendance at courses. However, the organisation, together with the ITO, if applicable, needs to focus more on individual trainee needs to understand what can be done to improve trainee qualification completion rates. Although it is acknowledged that workplace factors are responsible for some of the reasons why trainees would not complete, the organisation could make use of information prior to the course using needs assessment or collaboration with the relevant ITO, as well as regular follow-up to ensure it can assist trainees to achieve the qualification.

Opus ETC has insufficient data on individual trainee achievement of qualifications for each course to determine the percentage of trainees who complete a qualification and whether the majority of trainees achieve the qualification within the expected timeframe.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

The achievements of trainees are not clear because the organisation measures the number of total credits achieved rather than individual qualification completion rates, which would provide more accurate information on how well trainees achieve.

Overall, the information provided by Opus ETC shows that total credit achievement towards qualifications has been over 90 per cent annually over the past three years for each course, excluding diploma courses which have a credit completion rate of just over 50 per cent each year. However, anecdotally, not all trainees complete their qualification. There are a number of factors why trainees do not complete. One reason is that Opus ETC only provides training towards the theory component of some qualifications and the remainder follow-up responsibility lies with the relevant ITO. Another issue is that trainees' workplaces may not have policies and procedures in place to meet unit standard requirements for gathering workplace evidence. Other reasons may include literacy and numeracy issues or time constraints imposed by workplace and family commitments.

However, Opus ETC is responsible for ensuring it can measure trainees' individual achievement of the components it delivers in order to identify whether the majority of trainees achieve the qualification within the expected timeframe. This responsibility includes identifying any other trends in order to proactively identify targeted tutor support to improve trainee completion rates and increase the number of qualifications achieved. For example, swimming pool trainees are required to complete three unit standards to treat swimming pool water, but there is insufficient information on whether trainees complete all three unit standards and whether completion is within a reasonable timeframe. Opus ETC provides some standards policies and procedures for trainees to help them to complete the on-job assessment component, but better needs assessment up front and more immediate regular post-course follow-up could help remove barriers to achievement.

Trainees enrolled on the National Certificate in Water Reticulation attend Opus ETC to gain the theory knowledge required towards 54 of a possible 135 credits. Water Industry Training is responsible for the trainees' completion of the remaining credits. Collaboration between Opus ETC and the ITO on trainees' needs prior to the training could improve the time it takes for trainees to complete. Opus ETC is now working with Water ITO to centralise information on trainees' progress. This should reinforce anecdotal evidence of qualifications achieved and provide measurable data to demonstrate evidence of value to stakeholders.

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

The strategic plan adequately identifies training activities but would be strengthened by the organisation establishing clear training outcomes and targets to enable management and tutors to analyse results to see if trainees are achieving at the expected rates. Setting training outcomes and targets would enable the organisation and tutors to identify whether the organisation is achieving good training outcomes.

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**.

Opus ETC staff actively engage with water industry associations and industry people to understand the value of training to industry and how the courses can be improved. Opus ETC conducts an annual training needs analysis to ensure its training is matching the needs of industry. The trainees gain knowledge and understanding of safe water treatment and risk management. Courses are specific to employers' needs and feedback shows that the trainees demonstrate better knowledge of data collection and analysis following attendance at courses.

In 2009, following a training needs analysis, Opus ETC predicted a drop in trainee numbers for the water reticulation courses in 2010 due to industry feedback that most people working in this area had already achieved the required qualification. However, the number of trainees in 2010 has remained high, which the organisation believes is driven by a number of factors. First, the qualification is being reviewed and many people who have not previously completed intend to complete before new changes are in place. This factor is also affected by the Tertiary Education Commission's increased monitoring of completion rates of ITO trainees. Another reason is the merging of the Auckland city councils into one. This means that employees of councils that did not previously require workers to be qualified may now need them to be qualified to meet the new super city requirements. This indicates that the qualification will continue to be of value to the industry.

The majority of pool treatment courses are for people working in public swimming pools. The course prepares trainees well for the workplace by increasing their understanding of calculating chemical quantities and why they collect information. Trainees reported satisfaction with their tutors. Trainees also found the training materials useful and a valuable reference when back in the workplace.

Opus ETC also demonstrates an understanding of the value of courses for communities by providing pool water treatment training courses at various locations around the country to make the training more accessible for school caretakers outside the major centres so that school pool water systems are well maintained. These courses are also open to school board trustees as well as parents, and some courses have been provided for private pool owners. This increases awareness of the value of safe water for recreational purposes.

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 **Good**.

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

The courses provided are clearly aligned to industry needs and national qualification requirements. Opus ETC provides input to industry through attendance at forums and staff presentations at industry-led conferences. The staff use feedback from their involvement with industry to keep courses relevant and up to date with industry needs.

The majority of trainees sign a training agreement with an ITO (usually Water ITO or Infracrain), which directs them to Opus ETC for off-job training courses, except for pool treatment trainees, who enrol with Opus ETC directly.

Opus ETC has developed good working partnerships with the relevant ITOs. Opus ETC staff provide input to the development of unit standards and national qualifications because of their specialist knowledge in the field of water treatment and management. The Opus ETC training manager meets annually with Infracrain's training manager to plan training requirements, and feedback from Infracrain provides evidence that Opus ETC is meeting their needs.

Opus ETC is currently working with Water ITO to develop training resources that take into account literacy and numeracy needs of trainees to help increase qualification completions. In the meantime, staff continue to identify the needs of trainees when they attend courses or through employers feedback, where possible. A better needs assessment on enrolment conducted by either the relevant ITO or Opus ETC would help to identify appropriate resources or post-course support to assist trainees' qualification achievement.

Opus ETC delivers training on site that successfully meets the employer's requirements using their plant and equipment. This provides trainees with hands-on, practical understanding of plant operations aligned to their job requirements. Trainees attending courses at Opus ETC premises in Wellington take field trips to local plants to gain practical understanding of plant operations. The organisation regularly reviews the course activities and resources to ensure they continue to meet employers' and trainees' needs. A recent review of the water reticulation certificate courses found that tutors were over-assessing some aspects. This led to tutors developing lesson plan structures to improve consistency between courses, and breaking assessments into smaller segments to use for formative assessment, which gives more opportunities for trainees to progress.

Opus ETC also changed the block courses for pool treatment to three two-day courses instead of one six-day course, which means less time off work for trainees and provides them with opportunities to reinforce learning and reflect in the workplace before they are assessed. On the first day of the first module, trainees visit a local pool to see how the pool quality monitoring system operates. Trainees are assessed at the end of each course on theory and are then required to complete the on-job evidence-gathering before attending the next course to achieve the qualification. Trainees reported satisfaction with the training structure and resources. Feedback shows that employers like the shorter courses. However, there is a need to review the follow-up process once trainees go back into the workplace as

this may occur up to three months after attending the course. More immediate follow-up could help trainees who struggle with completing the on-job assessment requirements.

Overall, Opus ETC is not just driven by its business objectives; the company is proactive in understanding and adapting to industry needs through constant review of activities. Staff recognise that training people in treatment and management for safe water contributes to public health.

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**.

Opus ETC tutors have a wide range of specialist industry experience to ensure training is relevant to trainees' employment needs. Activities include classroom-based theory together with field visits and evidence collection in the workplace for practical training and assessments. The tutors have collaborated on developing consistent lesson plans to improve teaching and assessment practices as a result of a recent review of assessment materials. Tutors also reviewed resources to ensure materials, such as videos, DVDs, and reading resources are current and relevant. The variety of learning activities provided caters to differing learning styles.

Tutors have relevant teaching qualifications as well as technical backgrounds. Opus ETC tutors also receive one-to-one professional development sessions with an external educational mentor to upskill teaching practices, which assists tutors to keep their teaching practices and delivery styles engaging and relevant for trainees. Tutors also have an opportunity to co-deliver courses, providing a range of teaching styles to suit trainee needs. This provides an opportunity for tutors to observe each other to help improve their own course delivery.

Tutors review all aspects of training following each course, using tutors' post-course reports to make changes to improve the delivery and outcomes for trainees. Student feedback is also considered and, as a result of a recent survey of student satisfaction, the organisation has reviewed resources to see whether there are any suitable updated resources, such as DVDs, that are a better source of information. Trainees reported that they found the tutors very knowledgeable and that the tutors facilitated good understanding of the content. The training pace is also appropriate as it provides time for trainees to comprehend the information. Trainee comments in satisfaction surveys include the following:

“Puts some understanding of what we do on a daily basis”.

“Don't have to be a chemist”.

And from an employer:

“Do a very good job as [they] target what everyone needs to know but pitched as not [to be] too daunting”.

The findings from tutors interviews and trainee feedback demonstrate a characteristic of the organisational culture of ongoing review around teaching practice to meet trainee needs.

Trainees' assessment results are recorded on individual files, which tutors use to monitor individual progress. This enables the tutor to identify if an individual trainee is behind or may need assistance. Opus ETC provides ongoing feedback to trainees and to employers, as requested. Opus ETC also engages with the relevant ITO representative to provide information to support trainees completing assessment in the workplace. However, better analysis of completion timeframes and outcomes would provide information on overall trainee progress and provide further evidence of effective teaching occurring.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

Opus ETC provides trainees with sufficient support both during and after courses, which provides trainees with some motivation to complete the required on-job evidence gathering. However, the achievement information indicates that some trainees struggle to complete qualifications within an expected timeframe, whether it is pool treatment unit standards, a national certificate, or a diploma. Therefore, a review of guidance provided at enrolment and post-course follow-up could be conducted to identify where further assistance could be applied. This could reduce the time it takes to complete the required assignments following course attendance.

The organisation has already identified that success is related to trainee motivation and the support received from the trainees' employer. A more proactive and regular follow-up from tutors or Opus ETC support staff could be implemented in conjunction with the relevant ITO, if applicable, to identify any barriers to learning early to help trainees complete the requirements.

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 **Adequate**.

Opus ETC is part an international organisation involved in architecture and infrastructure, but the international organisation is not directly involved in the training activities of the New Zealand branch. The New Zealand branch general manager sets the training activities required to upskill the water industry and receives reports on training activities conducted by the training manager. This information contributes to the strategic plan. However, as previously mentioned, the establishment of clear training goals would improve the alignment of training activities through better monitoring of results to increase the number of trained and qualified people working in the industry. Currently, success is measured on

the number of credits achieved and reported rather than the number of people who complete qualifications or unit standards within a reasonable timeframe.

Staff are valued by the organisation for their experience and ability to provide training. Tutors are encouraged to share their ideas, and the recent appointment of a tutor to manage the moderation internally will help to improve consistency in lesson planning.

Opus ETC's strength is the industry networks its staff have developed within the water industry over many years. This means that valuable experience and information can be used to develop relevant courses for the industry. The Opus ETC training manager is proactive in building and maintaining relationships with key industry companies as well as with the ITO representatives. One area that the organisation is developing involves the ability to share information with the ITO representatives in order to improve trainees' progress towards achieving a qualification following attendance.

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 **Adequate**.

2.2 Focus area: Swimming Pool Water Treatment and Operations

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

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

2.3 Focus area: National Certificate in Water Reticulation (Service person) (Level 3)

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 this report.

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this 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 Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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-eer/introduction/>

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