

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: 4 November 2014

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review	6
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	6
Summary of Results	7
Findings	9
Recommendations	16
Appendix	17

MoE Number: 9441
NZQA Reference: C15805
Date of EER visit: 15, 18 and 19 August 2014

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:	Opus International Consultants Environmental Training Centre (Opus ETC)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	33 The Esplanade, Petone, Wellington
Delivery sites:	Training is provided at employers' sites and from the sole training centre in Petone.
First registered:	1 January 1994
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate in Water Treatment (Site Operator) (Level 3)• Certificate in Wastewater Treatment (Site Operator) (Level 3)• Diploma in Drinking Water (Water Treatment – Site Technician) (Drinking Water Assessment – Drinking Water) (Level 5)• Diploma in Wastewater Treatment (Site Technician) (Level 5)• Small Pool Operators (unit standard 20046)• Swimming Pool Water Treatment and Operations• Principles and Trends of Water and Wastewater Treatment and On Site Wastewater Training• Water and Environmental Sampling

- Confined Space Entry
- Polyethylene Pipe Welding
- Backflow Prevention and Surveying
- Design and Construction of Dairy Effluent Ponds and Warrant of Fitness Assessor Training
- Wastewater Microbiology for Process Control
- Making Good Decisions Training (Ministry for Environment)

Code of Practice signatory?:

No

Number of students:

Domestic: approximately 1,300 enrolments a year. Around 75 per cent of learners enrol in short courses and 25 per cent in certificate and diploma programmes. Māori participation rates are around 17 per cent, and Pasifika 5 per cent.

Number of staff:

Nine full-time equivalents

Scope of active accreditation:

Programme accreditations are as follows:

- 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)
- Swimming Pool Water Treatment
- Wastewater Treatment
- Watersupply System Water Disinfection
- Water Treatment (levels 1-3)

Distinctive characteristics:

Opus ETC has a joint venture with Water New Zealand to provide training to the water industry.

Several courses require the collection of evidence in the workplace. Opus ETC is the sole provider of the Diploma in Drinking Water, in conjunction with

the industry training organisation.

Recent significant changes: Opus ETC relocated to a new training centre in Petone premises (shared with Opus Research) and has expanded the provision of training, including providing training to the Australian water industry and the 'Making Good Decisions' training under licence to the Ministry for the Environment.

Previous quality assurance history: Opus ETC was last quality assured by NZQA in 2010. NZQA was Confident in both the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

In the last few years, Opus ETC has met industry training organisation moderation requirements in both the focus area programmes. The organisation did not meet NZQA's external moderation requirements for unit standard 9681 (core skills) in 2012 and 2013, but has met requirements in 2014.

An NZQA validation visit in June 2013 required Opus ETC to complete a small number of actions, including informing learners about expectations (such as through a code of conduct document), and informing students of the organisation's external evaluation and review (EER) category. Documents submitted for the EER identify that these actions have been undertaken.

Other: A large part of the Diploma in Drinking Water is undertaken in two or three blocks each year at the Opus ETC training centre. The remainder requires completion of activities and assessment in the workplace. Learners have training agreements with the industry training organisation and are employed in the areas of public health or water treatment.

The Small Pool Operators course is delivered over one day but has a component of post-course pool water monitoring to attain the unit standard.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

In addition to the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy, the following programmes were selected as focus areas:

- Diploma in Drinking Water (Level 5) (the diploma), being one of the highest-level programmes delivered and involving block-course delivery.
- One-day Small Pool Operators course. Opus ETC is the biggest provider of this training. It is a well-attended (around 150 learners enrol annually) example of one of the organisation's short training courses. Short courses are important to Opus ETC, with 75 per cent of learners enrolling in these courses. The course has been delivered by Opus ETC for a number of years. The organisation considered that it would be beneficial to include this course as a focus area for evaluation.

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-eeer/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 external evaluation and review was conducted by two evaluators who spent two and a half days at Opus ETC and engaged with Opus ETC management, the programme administrator, tutors from both focus areas, current and past learners, employers, and industry and sector representatives.

The evaluators visited a water treatment facility which provided context to the training and, within this context, provided the opportunity for the evaluators to engage with an operator on site who trains with Opus ETC and has been awarded the diploma.

A range of documentation was reviewed. This included the organisation's 2013 review, its self-assessment summary and evaluator briefing, the student handbook, student code of conduct, achievement data, moderation results, examples of programme audits and reviews, learner feedback, and stakeholder survey results.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

- The value of the training is excellent. The training contributes significantly to a trained, skilled and knowledgeable workforce and to improved individual performance in the workplace. Importantly, the training contributes knowledge that is key to the maintenance of public health and water quality.
- The training is highly relevant and meets the regulatory needs of different sectors. Opus ETC is up-to-date with industry developments and the training is informed by regular monitoring of the relevant sectors.
- Good achievement is evidenced by average credit achievement that mostly aligns with industry expectations (average credit achievement of around 60-65 per cent in the focus area programmes, and 75-85 per cent across all programmes delivered in the period 2011-2013).
- Training is delivered by experts well recognised by key stakeholders for their practical and theoretical knowledge and skills. They engage in professional development aimed at supporting the training delivery.
- Training is supported by quality resources and fair and consistent assessment.
- Improving the amount of information provided to learners prior to commencing the training would ensure learners fully understood training requirements and delivery. Better on-site computer support has been identified as a need by diploma learners to help in the completion of assessments. Some recent timeliness issues with assessment marking and feedback have been of concern to affected learners.
- More sophisticated analysis of the organisation's self-assessment data could further inform its understanding of educational performance, with results used to support improved completion rates.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

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

- Valid, comprehensive information is systematically collected across programmes to inform the organisation's understanding of educational performance.
- Self-assessment occurs at an individual learner level, at a class level, and at a programme level. All staff contribute and are involved in the process of self-review.
- Self-assessment information is purposefully reviewed to understand and improve educational performance. For example, Opus ETC uses learner feedback to add information to programme content. It uses achievement data to inform industry to seek improved results, and it has enhanced learner support processes following programme reviews.
- Tutor quality and teaching resources are supported by robust self-review processes (e.g. external and internal observation and moderation and learner feedback).
- The organisation continually reviews its self-assessment capability and makes improvements to remedy identified gaps, e.g. recently implementing a stakeholder survey after identifying the need for better collection of feedback about the value of the training for learners and employers.
- Self-assessment data analysis could be enhanced to provide further insights to support educational performance. Examples include reviewing qualification completions by two and half year cohorts for the diploma programme given that this is the expected duration, analysing learner non-completions by employment background in the Small Pool Operators course, and analysing re-sit information.

Overall, the organisation uses self-assessment information effectively to gain a good understanding of educational performance and to make useful improvements.

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**.

In the last three years, good learner achievement has been attained across the organisation's training:

- Credit achievement across all courses has averaged between 75 and 85 per cent.
- Average course completion across all courses has been around 70 per cent.
- Credit achievement in the diploma programme has averaged between 60 and 65 per cent (the exception being 50 per cent for the site technician strand in 2013). Opus ETC identifies that this outcome aligns with the industry training organisation's expectation of 62 per cent average credit achievement.

For the one-day Small Pool Operators course, approximately 60 per cent of learners attain the unit standard. Non-completions reflect that a proportion of learners do not complete the series of post-course pool water monitoring tests required (despite two subsequent reminders from Opus ETC).

This reflects that, for some learners, there is limited opportunity or no key driver to compel completion of the testing following the course (rather, the priority is gaining the knowledge from the 'on-course' component). Nevertheless, Opus ETC identifies that nearly all learners pass the on-course assessments, which demonstrates attainment of the knowledge about pool water treatment safety.

Opus ETC systematically collects and undertakes robust analysis of data to understand individual learner achievement, individual programme achievement, and overall achievement across its programmes.

Individual learner progress is monitored by each tutor. The head tutor for each programme closely reviews individual and class progress for each programme and regularly reports this information to the manager. The information is used strategically to liaise with clients to identify where improvements are needed. For example, in both focus area programmes, Opus ETC is working with client organisations (and the relevant industry training organisation in one programme) to

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

discuss low completions for those employers' learners, and potential strategies to assist learners to complete.

Management demonstrated good insights about learner achievement and a clear sense of strengths and areas for improvement. However, the organisation's understanding of learner achievement could be better informed by more robust analysis. For example, while the collection and review of annual qualification completion rates for the diploma programme gives limited insights due to the expected two and a half year duration of the programme, reviewing completions would provide a more meaningful picture of qualification attainment. Breaking down learner non-completions by employment background in the Small Pool Operators course would confirm where specific improvement efforts should lie, and analysis of re-sits would strengthen the organisation's understanding of any patterns of difficulty for learners.

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 training courses meet a significant need across different sectors to enable and support achievement of regulatory and industry requirements relating to water treatment, quality and public health.

Opus ETC is the sole provider of the diploma in collaboration with the industry training organisation. Attainment of the diploma contributes to achievement of an 'A-grade' rating for a water treatment plant.

The Small Pool Operators course is a requirement for people responsible for school swimming pools and is a required component of other aquatics qualifications. Several key industry stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation strongly endorsed Opus ETC's training as meeting their needs. Learners attain key foundation knowledge about public health risk issues, pool chemicals and equipment, and pool maintenance. The course helps non-technical people responsible for small pools (e.g. school pools) to understand why pool water quality is important. This knowledge is essential to contribute to public health.

Employers and learners benefit from being trained by recognised experts in the field who are current in their knowledge and practice through consultancy work. This is also a core benefit recognised by the expansion of Opus ETC's training to the Australian water industry.

Training is up-to-date and is informed by regular monitoring and extensive links to industry. Opus ETC contributes technical advice to inform qualification reviews and submissions on regulatory standards.

The theory and knowledge gained by learners completing the diploma and the Small Pool Operators course is highly valued by learners, graduates and other key stakeholders. Those interviewed for this evaluation highlighted this as enabling key aspects of their roles to 'fall into place'.

Opus ETC developed and delivered a graduate survey of past learners and employers in 2014. The survey identified key benefits to employers from the training, including employees developing more initiative, increased confidence to take on more responsibility, being more efficient, and requiring less supervision.

The graduate survey was specifically developed and implemented to improve Opus ETC's understanding of the value of outcomes it was providing to learners and key stakeholders. Findings of the survey provide a global view of performance which complements information collected and analysed from individual learner feedback for each course and from programme reviews. The organisation intends running the survey bi-annually and next time will look at how it is able to increase the number of employers responding. This would increase the validity of insights and the robustness of information obtained, including the potential to understand value for employers of different programme areas (this information is not systematically collected at present). Given the strength of the organisation's industry connections, this could possibly be supported by targeted in-depth engagement.

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**.

As identified in Findings 1.2, the programmes are needed by industry and contribute skills and knowledge that are important to public health. Opus ETC develops training in response to employers' specific needs.

Student feedback from programme evaluations confirms that programmes and activities match their needs. Feedback is mostly positive. Learners and employers interviewed confirmed the high relevance of knowledge acquired. Several examples demonstrate that Opus ETC is responsive to learner feedback and uses this to review and enhance programme content.

Programme delivery is tailored to ensure learners have access to experts in specific areas and are able to gain insights from colleagues. In the diploma programme, site visits to different treatment plants are facilitated to provide learners with insights into how different water treatment plants are operated. The two strands of the diploma are taught together to maximise the knowledge that learners can contribute from different perspectives.

While current diploma learners indicated to the evaluation team that they highly value the knowledge they have acquired and the expertise of the teaching staff, they also identified that the programme would better match their needs if their time on the block course was optimised by the provision of course information and resources upfront, as well as computer and internet access. A recent issue with less than timely marking of assessments and feedback was identified as a concern by some diploma learners, and which has had an impact on how they understand their progress (these issues are further considered in Findings 1.4 and 1.5).

Opus ETC has identified lower completions in the diploma programme by learners from one employer, and is currently working with the industry training organisation to identify how to best respond to this. The organisation is in discussions with the employer about specific strategies that might be tailored for that employer to better support learner completions.

While there is no evidence that the specific structure of the programme requires amending, a focused programme review examining the structure of the diploma and delivery would identify whether there are any areas of the programme contributing to non-completions. A review may also identify further ways in which learner and stakeholder needs could be enhanced, as well as areas that are working particularly well, including for learners who complete within the desired duration of the diploma programme.

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**.

Teaching staff are recognised by learners and other key stakeholders as experts in their different fields and are highly valued for the knowledge they bring to the training. Staff hold, or are currently pursuing, adult teaching qualifications, which is encouraged and supported by the organisation. The ongoing effectiveness of teaching staff is informed by regular external and internal teaching observations and feedback from learner evaluations.

The diploma programme involves several teaching staff. Consistency of subject matter, delivery and assessment is supported by regularly reviewed teaching materials, close collegial discussions and regular internal and external moderation. The respective industry training organisations confirmed that Opus ETC has met moderation requirements in the last few years.

The teaching is supported by quality teaching resources that are regularly reviewed. Learners on the Small Pool Operators course are provided with a procedural manual that was specifically designed as a tool to be used in practice to support learners who may not have such a resource in their pool water monitoring role.

Final Report

There have been delays in the marking of some diploma students' assessments in 2014 due to absences or staff workload. While this is being addressed, it means that some learners have had to study without knowledge of their progress and any feedback that could contribute to their learning. It is important that current actions to respond to this issue are embedded in delivery to ensure learner feedback remains current and sufficient.

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**.

Learners receive good information and guidance when they attend their training, and post-training support is readily provided. However, there is an opportunity for more information to be provided to learners prior to commencing the training.

Diploma students interviewed for the evaluation identified that they would like to receive the course handbook and other information prior to attending. They would also benefit from information about what to bring to their block course training.

A proportion of Small Pool Operator learners do not attain the unit standard because they do not complete the post-course pool monitoring assessment. However, it is not explicit from pre-course information that there is a post-course requirement. Nevertheless, Opus ETC does use its industry contacts to support learners to complete this testing – for example, linking learners to a council pool if they no longer have pool access.

Overall, learning is supported by quality learning materials and an attractive, modern learning environment physically structured to support collegial engagement. Opus ETC has recently moved to this new training facility and is looking at information technology support options for the learners. However, a current lack of technological resources is not meeting the needs of learners on the diploma block courses, who would benefit from computer and internet access to optimise the learners' time and support their training.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

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

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

Management's ongoing focus on supporting educational achievement is evidenced by its in-depth knowledge of learner achievement across the organisation's different programmes, and readiness to implement strategies to improve performance.

The support that the training centre receives from its governing organisation has resulted in the training centre's move to new premises, which is contributing to the development of a useful relationship with Opus Research. The physical move to new premises, along with an organisational review in 2013, is identified as contributing to new opportunities that the training centre has actively sought and implemented, including providing training to the Australian water industry and to other environmental sectors in New Zealand. Opus ETC is also currently focusing on how it can advance its use of information technology to support training delivery.

Management supports quality teaching through the provision of generous professional development, input from external observation, and staff appraisals and personal development plans. Staff value this support, as well as the passion and involvement of management and the culture of forward momentum and ongoing improvement that is facilitated. The development of, and focus on quality educational resources and processes is also driven by management.

All stakeholders engaged with for this evaluation confirmed their satisfaction with Opus ETC as a training provider. This included industry organisations and several employers with large employee numbers who regularly use Opus ETC to train and upskill staff. They value the quality of the training, the specialist expertise of staff, and the innovation and responsiveness of the organisation.

The stakeholder survey implemented in 2014 confirms that Opus ETC is meeting its objectives of contributing significantly to a trained, skilled and knowledgeable workforce, and is contributing to improved individual performance in the workplace. While there is an opportunity for the organisation to further develop its self-assessment to enhance the insights it has into learner achievement, self-assessment activity nevertheless is solid and the data robust. Data is used for the purposes of ongoing improvement.

Focus Areas

This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: Diploma in Drinking Water (Level 5)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Small Pool Operators course

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

NZQA recommends that Opus International Consultants Environmental Training Centre:

- Enhance its analysis of achievement data and re-sit information to better understand completion results.
- Provide more information to learners upfront about the practicalities of the training.
- Consistently ensure satisfaction with the level and timeliness of assessment results and feedback.
- As part of its self-assessment activity, consider undertaking a focused review of the structure for the delivery of the Diploma in Drinking Water.

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