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Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Zealand Leather and Shoe
Research Association Incorporated

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 10 February 2017

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

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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

Name of TEO:	New Zealand Leather and Shoe Research Association Incorporated (LASRA)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	2000 (but operating as the leather industry's principal research and training organisation since 1928)
Location:	69 Dairy Farm Road, Fitzherbert Science Centre, Palmerston North
Delivery mode and locations:	Trainees study using online supported materials, tutorials at their workplaces, and block courses at LASRA in the level 4 programme.
Programmes currently delivered and number of current enrolments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Certificate in Fellmongery Processing (Level 3) – five trainees• National Certificate in Leather Manufacture Technology (Introductory) (Level 3) – eight trainees• National Certificate in Leather Manufacture Technology (Advanced) (Level 4) – five trainees <p>These qualifications are offered to trainees enrolled with the Primary Industry Training Organisation (Primary ITO), under the ITO's approval and accreditation.</p>
Student characteristics:	In 2016, 18 trainees, all domestic, working at sites across New Zealand.
Number of staff:	One tutor, part-time (22.5 hours per week)
Scope of active accreditation:	LASRA has a focused consent to assess, which covers domain consent for Leather Manufacture Technology,

Leather Processing Knowledge, and Leather Processing Skills (all to level 4), standard consent for Leather Manufacture standards 8388 and 8390 (level 3), as well as Leather Processing Knowledge standards 8395 and 8399 (level 5). LASRA is most active in the Leather Manufacture Technology domain.

Distinctive characteristics:

LASRA works from specialist industry research and technology facilities in Palmerston North. Most trainees are employed in a tannery or some part of the hide or skin processing industry and are enrolled through their companies on training agreements with Primary ITO, and have their training costs subsidised. Trainees are nominated by their employers who are predominantly subscribed members of LASRA. The employers pay the trainees' fees and all trainees are supported, in the first instance, by the training officer (or equivalent) employed at each participating company.

There are only a dozen companies that have a leather and/or fellmongery focus. Like the meat sector, trainees are shift workers, and there is a high attrition rate that fluctuates in response to changes in the economy. For this year's cohort of trainees, at least 50 per cent are of Pasifika descent, and their ages range from mid-20s to 30s. Five to 10 per cent of those trainees are female (source: Primary ITO).

Recent significant changes:

Since the previous external evaluation and review (EER) in 2012, there has been considerable consolidation of the leather and tanning industry in New Zealand, with fewer companies treating a higher tonnage of product. This has in effect reduced the total number of companies served by the PTE.

Trainees from the leather and tanning industry in Australia study at LASRA from time to time. None were enrolled at the time of the EER.

Previous quality assurance history:

At the previous EER of LASRA in 2012, NZQA was Highly Confident in the PTE's educational performance and Confident in its capability in self-assessment.

LASRA has met the external moderation requirements of Primary ITO, as summarised in the table below from information provided by the PTE. An on-site moderation visit took place in July 2016.

Year	Unit standard	Result
2006	8384, 8392	Not supported
2007	8403	Supported
2008	8384, 8388	Supported
2009	8389, 8398, 8399, 8403	Supported
2011	8384, 8388, 8390	Supported with recommended improvements
2013	8384, 8390	Supported
2014	8388, 8388, 8408	Supported
2015	8388	Supported

LASRA continues to have around 10 per cent of its assignments verified by an external moderator. These indicate continued assessment quality, with minor modifications suggested and constructive feedback being provided to the assessor.

Other:

The qualifications currently on offer will be replaced by the new New Zealand qualifications as soon as programmes leading to these qualifications have been developed by Primary ITO and approved by NZQA. Following the Targeted Review of Qualifications, replacement qualifications were published by NZQA in May 2015. These were: New Zealand Certificate in Fellmongery and Leather Processing (Level 3) (Ref: 2486); New Zealand Certificate in Fellmongery and Leather Processing (Level 4) (Ref: 2492); New Zealand Diploma in Leather Processing (Technology) (Level 5) (Ref: 2494). The existing leather and fellmongery qualifications have had the last date for trainee entry extended to 31 December 2017.

LASRA operates under an ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation with IANZ (International Accreditation New Zealand), whose mutual recognition agreements with counterpart authorities in over 40 countries give international recognition to LASRA test results. LASRA is used by a range of standards authorities in New Zealand and abroad: International Council of Tanners, Commerce Commission, Standards Australia, International Council of Hides, Skins and Leather Traders Associations, Standards New Zealand, Consumer NZ, and the ISO Leather Standards Committee.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Focus areas and rationale for selection

- National Certificate in Feltmongery Processing (Level 3), a one-year, 46-credit programme. This is the entry-level qualification offered under the Primary ITO's accreditation.
- National Certificate in Leather Manufacture Technology (Advanced) (Level 4), a two-year, 120-credit programme. This is the highest-level qualification offered.

Both of these national certificates are unit standard-based.

3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Two evaluators conducted the on-site enquiry phase of the EER on 16 November 2016. The following people were interviewed: the chair of the LASRA management board, chief executive, administration manager, tutor, current and past trainees, including some in training, management, or research roles in industry or with LASRA. A representative of Primary ITO was interviewed by phone after the on-site visit.

Documentation considered by the evaluators to understand both educational performance and self-assessment included: the LASRA annual report and research strategy report; online material; assessments (both trainee-worked and unworked examples); moderation reports (from both Primary ITO and LASRA's external contract moderator); records of enrolments and outcomes, including tabulated performance information; trainee handbooks and marketing materials; trainee surveys.

Summary of Results

Statements of confidence on educational performance and capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance and **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **LASRA**.

Since the previous EER, LASRA has continued to work formally and closely with their key stakeholder group (the leather and tanning industry in New Zealand), and the Primary ITO¹, and is clearly meeting their staff training needs as far as formal operational-level qualifications are concerned. This training is supplemented and informed by the research and technical services provided by LASRA to this same sector.

Overall, there have been strong and consistent pass rates in the qualifications offered, and notably improved retention (see Findings 1.1). Data on achievement is well managed by the tutor, and known by and discussed with the governance and management of the PTE. Deeper analysis is perhaps warranted, for example regarding Tertiary Education Commission 'priority group'² trainee performance.

Trainees and companies benefit from deeper understanding of the technical processes involved in this industry. Graduates have benefited from career progression, pay increases and promotions – and the qualifications gained through LASRA PTE have been fundamental to those valued outcomes (see Findings 1.2). The PTE now has some recent and reliable information around career progression outcomes.

Teaching and guidance of trainees seems highly appropriate. It is relatively limited in extent, given that all trainees are in employment and engage in on-job learning and self-directed study which is supplemented and coordinated by the LASRA tutor. The tutor has extensive industry experience and visits each trainee in their place of work at least annually (see Findings 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5).

The governance, management and critical oversight for the PTE is simple, effective and fit for purpose. As indicated, the PTE is but one part of the wider LASRA enterprise – but benefits from the close connectedness with industry and the knowledge base provided by LASRA's research, technical services and strategic leadership (see Findings 1.6).

Gaining more insight into learner achievement and outcomes; successful implementation of the New Zealand qualifications (including the proposed greater

¹ LASRA is a member of the relevant Primary ITO Industry Partnership Group.

² Māori and Pasifika; under-25s.

degree of on-job assessment); and further development of the online learning methodology are areas for LASRA to work on moving forward.

Findings³

1.1 How well do students 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 **Adequate**.

Overall, there have been good pass rates in the qualifications offered, and notably improved retention with improved results in 2016. In interpreting the results, it is important to understand that some trainees take longer than the specified programme timeframe to complete. Many are still active and will likely complete the qualification. Non-active trainees are withdrawn. Data on achievement is reasonably well managed by the tutor, and results are known and discussed by the governance and management of the PTE.

Trainees gain a sound understanding of the material properties, technologies, chemicals and quality processes relating to the leather and tanning industry. The qualifications were developed by industry. Course work involves workplace projects and observations, and broadens trainees' understanding of their industry. This knowledge is both useful to and valued by the industry served by LASRA.

Table 1. Qualification completions (by %) 2012-2016

Programme	Number enrolled	Overall pass rates*	Māori/Pasifika trainee pass rates
National Certificate in Fellmongery Processing (Level 3)	26	69%	76%
National Certificate in Leather Manufacture Technology (Introductory) (Level 3)	55	87%	83%
National Certificate in Leather Manufacture Technology (Advanced) (Level 4) - Year 2 only	17	82%	100%

Source: LASRA

*Includes some 'pending' results for those trainees who are continuing but had not yet quite completed the qualification. Trainees can obtain a credit or merit pass depending on the quality of their work, and these are combined here.

Deeper analysis is perhaps warranted regarding Tertiary Education Commission 'priority group' trainee performance. Information provided after the on-site visit showed that over the period 2012-2016 for the level 3 programme, Māori and/or Pasifika trainees make up 39 per cent of enrolments, under-25s make up 25 per cent, and female enrolments 21 per cent. Although the PTE could provide accurate

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

head counts of Māori, Pasifika, under-25s and by gender, there was initially no evidence presented of comparative analysis to indicate which groups perform well or otherwise, and why. Information subsequently provided did, however, indicate that there is reasonable equity of achievement across learner groups.

According to anecdotal evidence, most non-completions relate to people leaving the industry; clearer evidence on reasons for withdrawal would be useful. Similarly, benchmarking of performance against other similar-level programmes would strengthen analysis of performance.

As indicated under TEO in Context, other quality assurance and external moderation confirm the reliability of the assessments.

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

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 qualifications offered by LASRA are the only formal leather and fellmongery manufacturing training available to this sector. Companies describe the qualifications as important steps towards a career within the industry. Staff enrolled range from process workers to degree-qualified technicians requiring leather manufacturing technology skills and knowledge.

Trainees and companies report benefit from deeper understanding of the technical processes involved in this industry. Graduates have benefited from career progression, pay increases and promotions – and the qualifications gained through LASRA have been fundamental to these valued outcomes. Using an industry survey, the PTE has recently gathered reliable information around career progression since 2006. Over 80 per cent of graduates (90 people) who have remained in the industry are now working in one of the five highest skill levels within the industry.⁴ This was a useful survey, with a 100 per cent response rate from industry, and provides a good basis to build a fuller understanding of training outcomes.

LASRA's promotional material for the programmes points to a number of potential 'competitive advantage' outcomes for businesses from their training – for instance, better product and quality control. More specific evidence linking the training to these outcomes would greatly strengthen the PTE's knowledge of the value of the training and potentially also their recruitment of trainees, if relevant.

⁴ Drum operator, leading hand, supervisor, departmental manager, senior manager.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

Since the previous EER, LASRA has continued to work formally and closely with their key stakeholder (the leather and tanning industry in New Zealand), and is clearly meeting the industry's staff training needs as far as formal operational level qualifications are concerned. This training is supplemented and informed by the research and technical services provided by LASRA to the sector.

It should be noted that qualifications offered are funded through ITO industry training Standard Training Measures rather than through the higher Student Achievement Component funding. The tutor works part-time, and the programme is therefore intended to involve part-time workplace-based learning. The engagement with the ITO has been ongoing and effective, as evidenced by the scrutiny of assessment quality and the constructive working relationship arising from developing the various new qualifications. This later work – given the scale of the PTE – has been a major focus of self-assessment in terms of determining industry need and designing new qualifications (which will include a diploma), alongside uninterrupted programme delivery.

The evaluators confirmed the findings from the Primary ITO moderation visit: 'the [ITO's] visit highlighted how well the provider is doing in keeping track of assessments, moderation, trainee progress, and filing. The use of the online programme most likely makes this more effective. It's a comprehensive system that seems to have been refined over time. The only improvements to be made is to incorporate the on-site training officer feedback/attestation as an additional source of evidence to improve authenticity'; (source: Primary ITO).

The PTE's excellent, ongoing match with stakeholder needs is shown through close interrelationship between LASRA and industry, and the model of programme delivery which is highly suitable for a workforce that is seasonal and involved in shift work over seven-day rosters (due to the perishable nature of the raw product).

See Findings 1.2 and 1.6 for further evidence of other ways in which LASRA effectively matches the needs of the learners and other stakeholders.

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 in the qualifications offered by LASRA is generally effective in communicating the correct information at a level appropriate to the qualification on offer. Comments from trainees contacted by the evaluators reflected survey findings which show trainees are largely satisfied with the material provided. However, in some cases (particularly when a trainee is working through material on processes or technologies not applicable in their workplace) their comments indicated insufficient information or alignment between information presented and assessment questions.

In addition, further development of the online learning methodology – which seems to have remained somewhat static since the previous EER – seems both reasonable and warranted. LASRA is poised to offer programmes leading to the new qualifications. They agree this is an appropriate point to step up online delivery. To that end, the PTE has engaged in self-assessment and trialling of other online courses to determine the best way forward.

Tutor professional development is related to the industry side rather than the teaching and course delivery aspect. Stronger involvement with educational professional development – potentially linked to the online learning dimension – is warranted. That said, marking and moderation practices, availability and feedback to trainees and using regular surveys to monitor satisfaction and identify gaps are all very sound. Instances of plagiarism or other forms of inauthentic trainee work being presented for assessment have been detected on occasion. The processes described around managing this and applying sanctions seemed reasonable.

Evidence from achievement (Findings 1.1), external moderation findings, trainee surveys and narrative descriptions by students and graduates indicate effective teaching.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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**.

Guidance and support processes involve 'training officers' nominating staff for enrolment, guidance information being provided in the form of an ITO training agreement and LASRA enrolment form, and course handbooks and log-ins. The tutor contacts each trainee, and a mix of self-directed study using online supported materials, tutorials at their workplaces, and block courses at LASRA describes the programme model. Overall, this is a well-tested model, and seems to work for most trainees based on both survey feedback and completion rates. The LASRA enrolment form has recently been reviewed and will provide more and earlier

information on the programme outline and content. This is an improvement to a reasonably well-honed process.

LASRA has recently analysed progression from the level 3 to level 4 programme for 2006-2016. This shows considerable fluctuation over time. Half of all trainees moved to the higher-level programme in 2006. This dropped to a low of 9 per cent as recently as 2009, but trended upwards to 38 per cent in 2016. Although this is useful analysis, the underlying questions around fluctuations (apart from workplace staff turnover) seem unanswered. Effective guidance may better connect trainees moving from one level of training to the next.

A challenge the PTE and industry are facing is reaching school-age trainees with information and learning opportunities relating to their sector. This is important given that growing value-added manufacturing is a government objective, is reportedly occurring, and apparently provides very good career opportunities. This is an area where more work can apparently be done in conjunction with industry stakeholders and the ITO. Between 2012 and 2016, less than 30 per cent of LASRA's trainees were aged under 25.

The LASRA library service is made available to trainees and is used by some during their study. It holds an extensive collection of books and journals directly relating to the industry and the courses offered. Overall, programme resourcing is appropriate.

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

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

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

Governance, management and critical oversight for the PTE is simple, effective and fit for purpose. LASRA is owned by its industrial membership of fellmongers and hide processors, tanneries, and ancillary members (including manufacturers and retailers). The membership elects the governing management committee (which also includes a Massey University member) and appoints the director of LASRA, who has direct oversight of the PTE.

Administrative and technical support to the part-time tutor are sufficient for the current scale of operation. A change to the results handling and reporting has occurred, and while no issues were identified with this, it may warrant review by the PTE to ensure good practice is maintained. Documentation such as the strategic plan (currently being reviewed for 2017 forward), annual report (which includes a specific PTE section), and research report are all comprehensive and capture the outputs and outcomes of the PTE.

Aside from year-by-year recruitment and teaching, the most comprehensive action and product of self-assessment are the new qualifications derived from the Targeted Review of Qualifications process. As outlined under TEO in Context, new

qualifications have been approved but the PTE has been – for reasons outside its control – unable to advance to the new qualifications yet, which has been disappointing. Industry stakeholders contacted by the evaluators were being kept informed about the new qualifications and were aware of this holdup. The PTE has been anticipating and responding to change and is active in informing key stakeholders about developments, barriers, and new opportunities (which in this case will include offering a higher-level diploma qualification).

Arrangements between LASRA and an ITO date back many years, predating the merger of the former New Zealand Industry Training Organisation with Primary ITO. According to Primary ITO, a memorandum of understanding or similar document was not historically in use. Primary ITO and LASRA should promptly rectify this, providing a document that reflects any updates to the delivery model resulting from the new qualifications.

In conjunction with industry (through a formal industry training advisory group which meets regularly), LASRA awards a range of trainee achievement awards, including monetary awards and a fully funded trip to the Shanghai Leather Fair. Also reflecting the PTE's community contribution and the international credibility of LASRA are the LASRA newsletters, research outputs, and presentations such as to the UK Society of Leather Technologists and Chemists.⁵ Knowledge is created and disseminated effectively and at multiple levels to audiences ranging from new process operators and managers to the scientific community.

The original quality management system descriptor document provided to NZQA at registration in 2000 is still useful, but could be refreshed by a review to provide the key operating document for the PTE. Changes to NZQA's key evaluation questions, tertiary evaluation indicators and compliance expectations should be considered and explicitly reflected within this review. That said, no compliance concerns surfaced during this evaluation, and the process for ensuring alignment with ITO and NZQA requirements is appropriate.

⁵ The 119th International Conference April 2016: Dr Sue Cooper, LASRA, delivered the Proctor Memorial Lecture, 'From Sheep Yards to SNP Chips – the Changing face of rawstock research'.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: National Certificate in Leather Manufacture Technology (Advanced) (Level 4)

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 Fellingmongery Processing (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

NZQA recommends that LASRA:

- Review the results handling and reporting process to ensure that management oversight of results approval occurs and that more than one staff member is involved.
- Continue with building a robust evidence base around graduate outcomes and other aspects of benefits derived from the training.
- Further investigate ways in which the LASRA knowledge base can be used to connect younger school-age trainees with career opportunities and training.
- Further develop the PTE's online capability and related sophistication of learning delivery through this medium.
- Work with Primary ITO to ensure that an up-to-date memorandum of understanding (or similar) is readily available to quality assurers or funders.
- Revisit the original quality management system descriptor document for the PTE in light of all changes, including NZQA EER amendments, since registration.

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/>.

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