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External Evaluation and Review Report

QEC Ltd

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 7 September 2018

QEC Ltd at a Glance

QEC Ltd provides training, consultancy, auditing, and assessment and certification services in regulatory and technical aspects of safety, hazardous substances, food safety, and quality management. Courses are one or two days long and some training is available online.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	62D Victoria Street, Cambridge
Code signatory:	No
Courses:	Approved Training Schemes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved Handler - Hazardous Substances (Training Scheme) (Level 3)• Health and Safety Foundation Skills (Level 2) (Training Scheme) (Level 2) Other courses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permit to work• Hazard identification• Health and safety representative• Auditing (unit standard 8086)• Incident investigation• Write a job procedure
Number of students:	257 students (six equivalent full-time students)
Number of staff:	Five
Scope of evaluation:	Health and safety courses
MoE number:	7880
NZQA reference:	C29092
Dates of EER visit:	21 and 22 June 2018

Summary of Results

High achievement rates lead to valuable outcomes for students and employers, and this is generally supported by effective processes. Self-assessment is generally good but there are areas where it could usefully be strengthened.

Confident in educational performance

- Student achievement is high. The skills, knowledge and attitudes developed are directly applicable to the students' workplaces. There are still opportunities to improve self-assessment through better use of data.
- Students and their employers gain skills, knowledge and attitudes that contribute to safer workplaces and meet regulations. Some good examples showed that the training leads to changes in both employee and wider workplace practice.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- QEC designs and delivers programmes to meet employer and student needs. Confidence in assessment would be increased by external post-assessment moderation.
- QEC courses involve students in their learning. The PTE provides support appropriate for the short length of the training.
- Governance and management effectively support educational achievement. However, stronger data analysis is needed to better understand the impact and value of both performance and improvements.
- QEC manages identified compliance accountabilities well. However, review of compliance requirements would be beneficial to ensure all important accountabilities are identified. When a non-compliance is identified, QEC acts quickly to rectify it.

Key evaluation question findings

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance: **Excellent**

Self-assessment: **Adequate**

Reasons for ratings:	Almost all students on QEC courses complete successfully (see Table 1, Appendix 1). Māori and Pasifika students successfully complete courses at the same rate as other learners. The skills, knowledge and attitudes to safety that learners attain are directly related to their employment and ensure the wellbeing of themselves and others in the workplace. However, self-assessment is not sufficiently developed, particularly in the use of data to fully understand educational performance.
Supporting evidence:	<p>For the last year (2017), over 99 per cent of students were assessed as competent. For the previous three years, all students were assessed as competent. This high pass rate occurs in the context of all learners being in relevant employment and enrolled in short courses (one or two days) that are undertaken as part of their employment. Students have up to three attempts to demonstrate the competencies required, and students who require re-sits are well supported.</p> <p>The course completion rate for Māori and Pasifika students has been inferred from the near 100 per cent success rate. Ethnicity data is not effectively collected, and analysis of achievement by ethnicity is not seen as worthwhile by QEC because of the patchiness of the data. This is a weakness in self-assessment. Additionally, the evaluators noted little progress in systematic analysis and self-assessment of completion data in areas identified in the previous external evaluation and review (EER). These areas include achievement by priority group, reassessments patterns, and patterns of achievement of learners studying in different modes.</p>
Conclusion:	Student achievement is high. Successful course completion rates are near 100 per cent, and the skills, knowledge and attitudes developed are directly applicable to the students' workplaces. There are still opportunities to improve self-assessment through better collation, analysis and use of data to make worthwhile improvements.

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

Performance: **Excellent**

Self-assessment: **Good**

Reasons for ratings:	<p>The training provided by QEC contributes to safer workplaces. It is often customised to reflect the context and requirements of individual workplaces. As a result of the training, students can gain industry-recognised credentials and employers can meet regulations. Knowledge of the value of the programmes is collected through industry engagement and used to inform programme review.</p>
Supporting evidence:	<p>The training provided by QEC enables industry to have employees who can work safely in the context of the training. This is valued by employers who are required to meet regulations, particularly in the handling of hazardous chemicals. In 2017, QEC certified 161 handlers of hazardous substances. The number of learners certified has increased each year since 2014. Employers interviewed during the EER also valued the advice and other services provided by QEC and the understanding of their individual company's requirements for training.</p> <p>Interviews with learners who had completed training with QEC identified that they valued the training as it enhanced their ability to protect the safety of themselves, their fellow workers and the environment.</p> <p>QEC uses the amount of return business as an indicator of value to employers. This is tracked and has increased since the comparable period last year. Since late 2017, QEC has maintained a log of workplace feedback which includes the performance of students who have completed courses. Although there were a limited number of entries in the log, it does contain some good examples of students applying what was learned on the courses to improve their workplace practices. Similar examples are also contained in QEC's log of unsolicited compliments which goes back several years.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>The programmes provided by QEC are very valuable to students and their employers as students gain skills, knowledge and attitudes that contribute to safer workplaces and meet regulations. Some good examples showed that the training leads to changes in both employee and wider workplace practice.</p>

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance: **Excellent**

Self-assessment: **Good**

Reasons for ratings:	Courses are regularly reviewed and updated. Consultation with employers before delivery ensures the courses meet employers' identified needs. Both student and employer satisfaction is high. Peer observation is used effectively to improve delivery, and internal moderation is used to ensure assessment is appropriate. Since the last EER there has been little external post-assessment moderation.
Supporting evidence:	<p>There is regular review of courses and training materials. QEC has invested significantly in the development of courses and learning resources in response to recent changes in legislation relating to many aspects of the training. When required, delivery is tailored to individual employer requirements. This may include specific reference to an employer's operating procedures and a site walk-around to ensure relevance to the workplace. In delivering courses, staff draw on their experience and that of their colleagues who have practical experience as industry consultants and auditors. Peer observation is used to ensure consistency of delivery and to improve teaching and provide constructive feedback to teachers. To provide better access to learning opportunities, QEC has made some courses available online and has provided professional development to staff to enhance this mode of delivery. Post-course student surveys show good levels of student satisfaction, and QEC uses this feedback to reflect on each course.</p> <p>QEC has a systematic process for the development of assessments which includes peer moderation. Relevant unit standard assessments are also pre-moderated by industry training organisations. NZQA moderated one unit standard in 2015 and another in 2016, the assessment materials were at the national standard. However, in 2017, the moderator did not agree with the assessment materials for the one standard submitted for national external moderation. Other than this, there has been little external post-moderation since the last EER and this weakens confidence in assessment. The lack of post-moderation is partly due to the industry training organisations not requesting moderation. However, QEC also delivers courses that are not unit standard-based.</p>
Conclusion:	QEC successfully designs and delivers programmes to meet employer and student needs. Confidence in assessment would be increased by external post-assessment moderation.

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance: **Good**

Self-assessment: **Good**

Reasons for ratings:	Support for students is sufficient and effective given the short duration of the courses (up to two days). Comprehensive information is provided to students before each course. Delivery is tailored to engage students through interactive activities, relevant examples and practical learning. Teacher support is provided for re-sits, which occur after the course. Appropriate literacy and numeracy support is provided when needed.
Supporting evidence:	<p>The courses offered by QEC are of short duration and directly related to the students' employment. Consequently, students are generally well motivated and little pastoral support is required. Effective learning support is provided in class. To facilitate this, class sizes are kept small and when complex material is covered an additional teacher may be provided. QEC ensures that courses contain interactive components to involve students in their learning. Learners commented that they undertake the training alongside their co-workers and sometimes their supervisors, and there is a good atmosphere in the class.</p> <p>Students who undertake re-sits after the course are given feedback on their assessment and are supported by teachers with additional teaching. This is effective in ensuring students meet the course requirements.</p> <p>In response to a recommendation in the last EER report, a staff member has taken a course on working with Māori learners and has shared the learning with other staff. Company policy and guidelines have been updated to reflect this new knowledge. However, the effectiveness of this change has not been evaluated.</p>
Conclusion:	QEC provides courses constructed to involve students in their learning, and provides support appropriate for the short length of the courses. Student needs are identified and responded to appropriately.

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

Performance: **Good**

Self-assessment: **Good**

Reasons for ratings:	<p>QEC has a clear focus on being a bespoke training provider with an emphasis on quality. Teaching and learning is well resourced and matched to customer needs. Staff are valued and appropriate professional development opportunities and induction are provided for new staff. Development of new areas of activity are being well resourced. Although QEC is a small provider with high course success rates, there are still opportunities to use the analysis of data more effectively to inform self-assessment.</p>
Supporting evidence:	<p>After the last EER, QEC focused on growth, and the organisation was staffed to support this. When the growth did not eventuate, the focus of the organisation was reviewed and staffing reduced. During the period of change, continuity of provision was maintained as shown by the continued high pass rates.</p> <p>The provider informally benchmarks itself against competitors, particularly in relation to price and quality of delivery, and this has informed the current strategy. The PTE has identified a new industry sector for its training activities, and this is being developed with the employment of an additional staff member.</p> <p>Staff are valued and there is good information-sharing across the small team. Director's awards recognise the contribution of staff members. Staff are supported in relevant professional development and new staff receive a good induction into the business. Staff appreciated the time available to them to update the courses and learning resources.</p> <p>Although QEC has responded to some of the recommendations in the last EER report, the evaluators identified little progress in the two recommendations associated with self-assessment. QEC, consistent with its role as an industry auditor, largely uses an audit model for its own quality improvement. Self-assessment would be strengthened through better data analysis to understand the impact and value of performance and improvements.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Governance and management effectively support educational achievement. However, better use of data is needed to inform self-assessment and identify opportunities for improvement.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance: **Good**

Self-assessment: **Good**

Reasons for ratings:	QEC has processes in place to ensure that it is compliant with the compliance obligations it has identified as important. For example, regular self-audits are conducted against NZQA's requirements for maintaining registration as a PTE. However, this process could usefully be widened to include other NZQA rules. Where non-compliances are identified, they are quickly addressed.
Supporting evidence:	QEC maintains a business manual which provides policy and guidance for its operations. Compliance with NZQA's requirements for maintaining PTE registration is audited annually and referenced to the business manual. The most recent audit identified some non-compliant items which are being addressed. This annual audit could usefully be extended to cover all relevant NZQA rules. For example, the evaluators noted that NZQA's Enrolment and Academic Records Rule 4.1(d) was not fully complied with because student nationality is not recorded for all students. On the current enrolment form, it is optional for students to identify their nationality. About 60 per cent of learners do not provide it. Once QEC was aware of the requirements of the above rules they promptly changed the enrolment form to address the identified issues.
Conclusion:	QEC manages identified compliance accountabilities well. However, review of compliance requirements should be broadened to ensure all important accountabilities are identified. When a non-compliance is identified, QEC acts quickly to rectify it.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Health and Safety Training

Performance: **Excellent**

Self-assessment: **Good**

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation will improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent EERs to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that QEC Ltd:

- Strengthen self-assessment of educational performance, including more systematic analysis of Māori and Pasifika student achievement.
- Plan and implement systematic external moderation.
- Develop a comprehensive understanding of important compliance accountabilities.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

NZQA requires QEC Ltd to:

- Ensure it is compliant with the requirements of NZQA's Enrolment and Academic Record Rules.

Appendix 1

Table 1. QEC successful course completion

Year	% assessed competent*	Number of learners			
		Not yet completed	Not competent	Competent	Enrolled
2017	99.6%	14	1	242	257
2016	100%	0	0	208	208
2015	100%	0	0	136	136
2014	100%	0	0	142	142

*Based on enrolled students who have completed training

About QEC Ltd

Distinctive characteristics: QEC provides specialised regulatory and technical short courses in the fields of environment, health and safety, hazardous substances and quality management. Training is provided either on QEC's premises, on-job or online.

Recent significant changes: Following the last EER, QEC focused on growth, and the organisation was staffed to support this. When the growth did not eventuate, the focus of the organisation was reviewed and staffing reduced. A new training scheme in health and safety foundation skills was approved by NZQA in October 2016. A new staff member has been employed to develop opportunities to provide services in an industry sector that QEC has not previously worked in.

Previous quality assurance history: The last EER was completed in September 2014. At that time NZQA was Confident in both QEC's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

QEC has applied for accreditation by International Accreditation New Zealand as an inspection body for its hazardous substance auditing programmes. The document review phase has been completed.

The Skills Organisation has pre-moderated four unit standard assessments in recent years. Three assessments were at the appropriate standard and one was not.

Competenz pre-moderated assessments for two unit standards in 2016. Neither assessment was initially approved but revised assessments were approved on resubmission.

NZQA has moderated one unit standard in each of the last three years, with varying results as shown in the table below.

Year	Moderation result	Assessments confirmed
2015	Requires modification	3 out of 3
2016	Approved	3 out of 3
2017	Not approved	0 out of 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](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction) 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud¹*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*

¹ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

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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