Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Zealand Equine Dentistry School Limited

Not Yet Confident in educational performance
Not Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 31 July 2013
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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 Equine Dentistry School Limited (EDS)
Type: Private Training Establishment (PTE)
Location: 6 Crawford Road, Te Kowhai, RD8 Hamilton, Waikato 3288
Delivery sites: 6 Crawford Road, Te Kowhai RD8, Hamilton
First registered: 23 November 2010
Courses currently delivered: Certificate in Equine Dentistry (Level 5)
Code of Practice signatory?: Signatory; approved for students aged 18 upwards
Number of students: 2010/11: three
2012/13: six
Number of staff: Three full-time
Scope of active accreditation: Certificate in Equine Dentistry (Level 5)
Distinctive characteristics: EDS offers the only NZQA-accredited equine dentistry programme in New Zealand. The programme is six months long and, comparatively, it is the longest equine dentistry programme offered nationally and internationally.
Recent significant changes: EDS employed two new tutors to teach the 2012/13 cohort of students and has recently
employed an office manager and administrator.

Previous quality assurance history:
The school has only been operating for two years. This is the school's first external evaluation and review (EER).

Other:
The school is based at the home of the owners and is an arm of their equine business, which includes: an equine dentistry practice and a sales and distribution service for equine dentistry tools and disinfectants.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

In accordance with NZQA policy, the mandatory focus area of governance, management, and strategy was included in the scope of this EER. The Certificate in Equine Dentistry (Level 5) was also selected as a focus area as it was the only programme offered by EDS at the time the scope for this EER was developed.

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.

The EER was conducted over one day by two NZQA evaluators. The evaluation involved interviews with:

- The two directors
- One of the two tutors (by phone), the other tutor having resigned the day before the EER was unavailable
- Two stakeholders via phone
- Three graduates; two via phone and one in person.

The evaluation also involved a review of relevant documentation such as the completed NZQA course approval application; completed programme evaluation forms; assessment material, self-assessment report; performance management framework; and associated correspondence.
Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the educational performance of **New Zealand Equine Dentistry School Limited**.

EDS has a clear purpose. Founded in 2004 by the two directors, the school’s goal is to provide quality equine dentistry training and education to assure quality dental care and treatment for horses. One director is a practising equine dentist and a certified advanced member of the International Association of Equine Dentistry. He has 30 years of equine dentistry experience in New Zealand and abroad as both a practitioner and teacher, having taught equine dentistry in the USA between 1999 and 2004.

The six-month Certificate in Equine Dentistry (Level 5) (CEDL5) was developed by EDS in response to gaps in existing equine dentistry education. Current courses in both Australia and the USA are a maximum of five weeks in duration and provide only an introduction to the industry. The CEDL5 is the only NZQA-accredited equine dentistry qualification in New Zealand (and possibly the world). EDS applicants enrol on the programme because of its length (six months) and the programme content which has a 50/50 mix of theory and practice. Applicants also choose the programme because one of the directors has a national and international reputation in equine dentistry.

Teaching at EDS is effective and students complete their studies and gain qualifications. They obtain meaningful skills, establish small businesses and become self-employed equine dentists (and/or go on to further studies). To date, nine students have enrolled in the programme and successfully completed and gained the qualification. One hundred per cent (three) of the 2011 student cohort and 83 per cent (five) of the 2012 student cohort have become, or are intending to become, self-employed equine dentists. One of the 2012 graduates went on to further related studies in Ireland.

The directors of EDS have designed the framework and standards for a comprehensive programme. However, they have not identified or built the platform or processes needed to support the programme. Student success is evident, but tutor engagement, satisfaction and commitment are not.

While EDS student results and outcomes are 100 per cent positive, EDS’s systems for assuring educational performance overall require improvement. The subject matter expertise of EDS staff is exceptionally high, which is an advantage because the course content is complex. A robust outline for the programme of study has been designed. However, the day-to-day teacher and learner resources are not well documented. A full curriculum document with module and lesson plans, teaching timetables and assessment tools (and timetable) were not available at the time of the EER. EDS lacks a formalised and operational internal and external moderation system and a systematic programme evaluation process that leads to
documented self-improvement/s, i.e. steps, actions and outcomes. Such steps will ensure that students are well informed about the course and its requirements and that assessment is timely, valid, reliable and sufficient. These processes are not currently occurring at EDS.

EDS currently operates as one arm of a four-part business but lacks a focus on the educational components of its education arm. Although staff at EDS are qualified experts in their disciplines, their levels of knowledge, skills and expertise in adult teaching (principles and practice) are limited, as evidenced by the absence of the documents and systems mentioned earlier.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is Not Confident in the capability in self-assessment of New Zealand Equine Dentistry School Limited.

The school’s capability in self-assessment is still developing. The school has been through significant change since its first cohort of students in 2010/2011. These changes include:

- In 2012, the establishment of a new, purpose-built equine dentistry facility and separate classroom
- Application for and approval by NZQA for a change of site (from Pukekohe, Auckland to Te Kowhai, Hamilton)
- Approval in principle from Immigration New Zealand to employ foreign tutors
- Employment of two foreign tutors with approved work visas
- The development of two new course approvals (excluding a proposed Diploma in Equine Dentistry)
- The development of clinic days on a variety of equine dentistry topics
- Employment of a full-time office administrator
- Investigations into Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding processes to accommodate potential domestic students who want to access student loans.

Although EDS was able to articulate this list of changes and their relevance and applicability, a systematic process for recording, analysing and monitoring of change was not evidenced. To better support self-assessment and educational performance, growth and development, EDS would benefit from the development of systematic processes for documenting change, including inception, progress and outcomes. In the absence of any formal documentation (such as minutes of board and staff meetings that track, monitor and record the inception, development and outcomes of ongoing development and change at EDS), self-assessment is currently reliant on memory (recall) which is not systematic. While the school is still
in a development phase, there is no clear documentation of the future goal or the steps achieved to date or the learning realised from the steps taken so far.

The degree to which EDS’s student assessment and evaluation processes contribute to ongoing self-assessment could be strengthened. While student achievement is evidenced through completed assessments, individualised student learning plans informed by diagnostic testing (for example) are not. This type of testing is important because entry criteria for the CEDL5 programme grants special admission to applicants (aged 20 years and over) with no formal qualifications but who can demonstrate evidence of relevant learning and experience. Likewise, while completed course evaluations were held on file, evidence was not available showing that the data gathered was used for self-assessment purposes. Examples of completed student assessments were also on file, but internal and external pre- and post-moderation had yet to occur.

Subject matter expertise among EDS management and teaching staff was clearly evident and, on the surface, the school was/is meeting the learning needs of the students. Conversely, the knowledge and skills needed to effectively manage and operate EDS as an adult education facility were underprovided. For example, in the absence of clearly defined job descriptions and performance indicators, EDS tutors, who were qualified in their disciplines but inexperienced in tertiary education and teaching, were confused and upset when asked to perform tasks which, in their view, were outside the scope of their signed contracts. The tasks included developing resources such as lesson plans, tutor teaching tools and learner resources for all programme modules, undertaking equine dentistry work at night and in the weekends as well as promoting the school and programme and writing academic papers. Tutors were also expected to work at a reduced rate of pay when students were not at school during the mid-term break.

The tutors, who were teaching five days a week from 9.00am to 4.00pm, saw these tasks and expectations as excessive and an encroachment on their (unpaid) time. As a result of the tension around these matters, at the time of the EER one tutor had resigned and it was uncertain whether the other (who was on holiday at the time) was returning. Despite this situation, EDS had not taken steps to formally document staff concerns and/or management’s attempts to resolve them.

EDS is a young and evolving TEO. A document outlining quality management processes is in place, having been developed as part of the school’s application to NZQA for registration and course approval. To achieve sustainable growth for the future, the degree to which the school’s quality processes are understood and put into practice requires strengthening. For example, the development of human resources/employment and complaints procedures and the systematic recording of findings, actions and outcomes of early developments will allow EDS to mitigate some issues and have processes in place to handle others.

Internal and external pre- and post-moderation of assessments (which is not occurring currently) is also critical to the development of robust, effective and
functioning systems and procedures that are aligned with quality management processes.
Findings

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 **Poor**.

Learner achievement at EDS is good. Student numbers are small and teaching and learning is managed to ensure students receive the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to pass assessments and complete and achieve the qualification. Students gain the necessary knowledge and skills to establish small businesses and become self-employed equine dentists (and/or go on to further studies). To date, nine students have enrolled on the programme to successfully complete and gain the qualification. One hundred per cent (three) of the 2011 student cohort and 83 per cent (five) of the 2012 student cohort have become, or are intending to become, self-employed equine dentists. One of the 2012 graduates went on to further studies in Ireland.

Students are exposed to a wide variety of learning opportunities during off-campus workplace activities, allowing them to use the knowledge and skills they learn at the school. This experience allows the students to also experience the demands presented by equine dentistry clients in the context of their farms.

Students at EDS are assessed at the end of each module. Assessment methods include paper-based tests and practical observations. Students receive assessment-related feedback and assessment tools for each module, and examples of completed student assessments were on file. However, in the absence of formalised internal and external moderation processes, the validity, reliability and sufficiency of assessment tools and student results are unknown. Benchmarking with other equine dentistry programme providers would help to ensure the reliability of EDS’s assessment results. As a priority, EDS is strongly encouraged to develop and implement its moderation systems.

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

Built on the experience and reputation of an internationally recognised equine dentist, the Certificate in Equine Dentistry provides a thorough programme, offering a robust qualification. EDS produces outcomes of value to the equine industry, including local and national horse stud and farm owners. Working in partnership with the industry, EDS provides free equine dentistry services and, in return, receives horses on which the students can practise and apply their learning. In 2012, EDS students spent two weeks on a farm in Northland where they worked on 120 horses. Students applied their learning well in the field and stakeholders had confidence in their abilities as they were closely monitored, supervised and guided by their tutors. Stakeholders, including students (who enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to practise on living animals), described this arrangement as a ‘win-win situation’.

Students at EDS have the opportunity to attend equine dentistry consultations with the director/equine dentist. The opportunity to observe an expert in action was valued and appreciated by the students, although one student from the 2012 cohort stated that these opportunities were few in number. Having enrolled in the course because of the director’s reputation, the student expressed disappointment at the limited time spent under his tutelage. Conversely, 2011 students who were taught by the director had no such complaints. To ensure students’ expectations are clarified and met prior to enrolment, EDS should ensure that students receive full and accurate programme information concerning the practicum components.

Entering into business as self-employed equine dentists, the CEDL5 graduates gain valued outcomes. That said, and to its credit, EDS is cautious about flooding the equine dentistry market with graduates as the market is relatively small and a large influx of graduates would impact negatively on employment opportunities and outcomes. As such, EDS student numbers are kept low (maximum 10). A fee reduction in 2012 has increased the accessibility of the programme for students. According to EDS, the fee reduction was implemented to improve their chances of gaining TEC funding.

Learners at EDS believe they have had a very thorough education from credible, knowledgeable and skilled people; they also believe they have benefitted from working under an internationally recognised equine dentistry expert (albeit in some instances this opportunity was nominal). Students gain a Certificate in Equine Dentistry and are provided with a potential academic pathway as EDS is currently considering the development of a diploma. According to EDS, there is a need for a diploma because the field of equine dentistry is continually evolving and an additional six months of study would equip graduates with advanced equine dentistry knowledge and skills. Students who were interviewed agreed that the...
course was too short and supported the idea of a longer course that provided more opportunity to practise the knowledge and skills learned. Prior to any such development, however, EDS is encouraged to consider (and undertake) market research to determine the value of a diploma in the market; EDS could also strengthen its educational systems and practices if it is to consider delivering a higher qualification.

EDS is in touch with, and produces outcomes that are of value to, the equine industry, i.e. qualified equine dentists. Improved evaluation and feedback processes that quantify the value stakeholders’ receive (and which lead to action plans and improvements underpinned by stakeholder feedback) would strengthen EDS’s self-assessment.

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 **Adequate**.

The directors of EDS are engaged in and have intimate knowledge of the equine industry. As such, they are well known and in close touch with industry needs. The school is funded through student fees and, along with the CEDL5, was developed based on the need for a more in-depth and comprehensive equine dentistry programme and qualification to ensure quality dental care for horses.

The school also meets the needs of students who gain knowledge, skills and qualifications and enter the equine dentistry trade. Graduates of the CEDL5 were satisfied that the programme had given them access to self-employment in an industry they love. That said, while two of the three student interviewees expressed satisfaction with the length, content and practicum components of the programme, one thought that the programme was rushed and too short for the amount of content that was taught. Concerns about the practicum component were also expressed. It was described by one student as disorganised, unpredictable, subject to change at short notice and providing insufficient practical equine dentistry experience. This student (although gaining the qualification) did not feel wholly confident to begin practising at the time of graduation. The student also felt that she would have benefitted from spending more time in the field with the director, who is a practising equine dentist, but had only one opportunity to do so.

While it is recognised that practicum tasks do not always occur during school hours, there appears to be no provision to prepare staff or learners for practicum components, which are contingent on client equine dentistry needs. There is no clear line between a planned educational approach to diverse practicum experiences and a response to meeting client needs. EDS is aware of these concerns. However, without a substantive programme evaluation system, efforts to
address and improve practices are hindered by not being recorded and/or dealt with in a methodical way that addresses student needs as they arise.

EDS has yet to apply for TEC funding, and students pay full fees. The 2010 fees were $28,000 including accommodation, but in 2012 fees were reduced to $14,000, excluding accommodation and equine dentistry tools. Students said the course was expensive, which could explain the low numbers (three) in 2010, which doubled in 2012 (to six) with the 50 per cent fee reduction. The directors are intending to apply for TEC funding and the 2010 fee reduction was introduced in preparation for this.

To support intended changes, EDS is encouraged to move from a reactive to a proactive state by adopting a systematic approach to, for example, recruiting new staff, developing a TEC funding application and a Diploma in Equine Dentistry. These proposed changes are significant and will be more achievable if they are underpinned by systematic self-assessment processes, including more formalised processes for identifying and analysing stakeholder needs and gathering their feedback.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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 tutors at EDS are highly qualified in their field of expertise. The 2010 tutor was an equine dentist, while the 2012 tutors were a human dentist and a veterinarian. These (2012) tutors had attended the school in previous years as foreign students. The programme is a 50/50 mix of theory and practice, with most theory taught in an upfront lecture style using some visual and practical teaching aids. Other teaching aids include horse skulls and cadavers which students took apart then re-assembled and dissected as part of the learning. On the whole, students were satisfied with the quality of teaching, which was described by two students as structured, organised and well resourced despite having to share their tools.

The CEDL5 has a large (50 per cent) theoretical component, which is taught in lecture fashion followed by testing. Students confirmed that some theory classes were a whole day in duration, which they found excessive. Realising that this method was ineffective because students were not remembering what had been taught and were failing the ensuing tests, one tutor adapted his teaching methods, for example using coloured wool to illustrate the different blood vessels in a horse’s head. Teaching practice was also modified to include practicum components to illustrate the theory being taught. These changes demonstrate EDS’s attempts to modify teaching practices to be more effective. In keeping with adult teaching theory, the school is encouraged to continue developing alternative student-centred methods that improve student learning and retention.
EDS has separate, custom-built facilities for teaching the theoretical and practical components of the programme. The facilities allow for the separation of classroom-based (theoretical) and practical teaching, which also enhances the effectiveness of the teaching. Students said the opportunity to practise on live horse was invaluable. Tutors observe the students during all practical components, and discussions before, during and after these activities are very thorough. Conversely, students expressed disappointment at the sometimes unpredictable nature of practicums. In response to this concern, management said it could not control equine dentistry needs and it was not possible to ensure that horses requiring treatment would be available for student training purposes at a given point in time. This situation is a risk for EDS and the school is encouraged to consider a risk management plan to ensure students have access to the (live) resources needed to fulfil the practicum components of the programme; and that access is better planned and organised.

Students said that assessment expectations were unclear and a lot of time and effort was spent doing small tests and projects. The small tests were paper-based, administered fortnightly and followed by practical exams. To improve assessment practices, EDS is encouraged to develop a programme assessment schedule and a pre- and post-moderation system to ensure that assessment is sufficient, balanced and fair. These tools should be available since the programme has been taught previously. While the tutors are highly skilled and qualified in their disciplines, they are not provided with teaching resources and lesson plans to systematically deliver a consistent programme. This is also evident in the business module of the programme which students felt was underprovided and did not equip them well enough to confidently enter into business as equine dentists. The EDS directors are aware of these issues and are encouraged to address them in a planned and systematic way.

The CEDL5 is a competency-based programme of study using percentage-based assessments. This practice demonstrates limited tutor understanding of competency-based assessment. The introduction of staff professional development by EDS is encouraged.
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 **Adequate**

Students at EDS feel supported by the directors and teaching staff and the programme was reported to be enjoyable and valuable. To support their studies, students receive a programme handbook explaining the subject areas to be covered. Textbooks are purchased by the students and they can also borrow books from EDS. Accommodation for international students in nearby Hamilton was described as comfortable and homely.

The training facilities at EDS (classroom and workshop) are of good quality, although the sharing of tools and the lack of a student toilet facility (and the subsequent use by students of the directors’ home toilets) is not ideal. The directors are aware of this need and are taking steps to address it. EDS has an open-door policy and graduates are free to come back and seek equine dentistry advice from the directors. Skype conferences with graduates have also been arranged for this purpose.

The directors also import and sell equine dentistry tools. Graduates order and purchase tools prior to programme completion and are usually equipped to begin work when they finish their studies. For 2012 graduates, however, a late order by EDS meant they were still waiting for their tools six weeks after the programme ended. Graduates were frustrated by this situation, not only because they had clients waiting and could not begin work, but also because the delay was a bad start to their businesses. EDS is working to address this situation. There is a lack of clarity around tutor and director responsibilities – the directors said the tutors were meant to order the tools, and vice versa.

The CEDL5 does not attract student loans. Students said the course was expensive. However, the directors said the high fees attracted highly motivated students who studied hard. For the future, EDS is to explore TEC funding options.

One of the three student interviewees said that teaching days were sometimes disorganised. Scheduled classes would sometimes be cancelled the night before because horses were not available for the practical component of studies. The student (and also the tutor who was interviewed) found this situation disruptive and inconvenient; likewise, the provision of one set of dentistry tools per two students resulted in students waiting to use tools in practical sessions. The development of a register of horses and the supply of more tools could alleviate these situations.
1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

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 Poor.

EDS is led by passionate and committed directors who own and manage the school as an arm of their equine dentistry business. The underlying philosophy of EDS is commendable and the school is devoted to the equine industry. Directors have lots of ideas for taking the school forward, although the development of a systematic decision-making process was not in evidence at the EER. Currently the school is managed alongside the other branches of the directors' businesses, and its fundamental operations could be managed better to align with educational practices.

To lift the educational performance of the school, academic and staff management processes require strengthening. For example expectations of tutorial staff are heavy, but job descriptions are light on detail. Staff remuneration is not well aligned to job expectations and the high level of knowledge, expertise and qualifications required for the position.

Subject matter expertise among directors and tutorial staff is clearly evident. However, the knowledge and skills to effectively manage an adult education facility are lacking. The directors work hard to provide a programme that will benefit students and the industry they will work in. Goals for the school have been amended in recent years and there are plans for future development and growth; however, there is no documentation to validate goals set, achieved, changed or dismissed. A cohesive future plan with strategies to address recent staffing and scheduling issues would benefit EDS.

The student population is currently small and is easy to manage and monitor. While the directors have recently hired a manager to assist with school administration, they have not recognised the need for a set of adult education skills to assist in the academic development of the school. There is no strategy in place to attract, manage and retain quality tutors skilled in their areas of study and with the ability to educate others.
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 **Poor**.

2.2 Focus area: Certificate in Equine Dentistry (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 **Adequate**.
Recommendations

NZQA recommends that the Equine Dentistry School Limited:

1. Develop and implement more comprehensive academic management and self-evaluation systems covering:
   - Staffing and employment
   - Professional development
   - Curriculum development (including module and lesson planning)
   - Pre- and post-moderation of assessments
   - Benchmarking with other equine dentistry schools
   - Evaluation of learning and teaching
   - Appraisal of stakeholder needs and feedback
   - Analysis and utilisation of data to help inform programme development and improvement of the learning experience.

2. Develop and utilise a systematic process for documenting change, including inception, actions, progress and outcomes.

3. Develop a cohesive plan with strategies to address recent staffing and teaching scheduling issues.
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).


NZQA
Ph 0800 697 296
E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz