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External Evaluation and Review Report

Alpha Training and Development
Centre

Date of report: 12 March 2020

About Alpha Training and Development Centre

Alpha Training and Development Centre is a small, family-owned private training establishment delivering one NZQA-approved and Tertiary Education Commission-funded training scheme in welding. The training occurs within an industry-like facility and prepares students to also complete an internationally recognised welding certification test. The organisation also assists people already working in industry to recertificate when required.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	1 Smith Street, Lepperton, New Plymouth
Code of Practice signatory:	N/a
Number of students:	Domestic: 12 equivalent full-time students in 2018; one Māori equivalent full-time student in 2018
Number of staff:	Two full-time and two part-time equivalents
TEO profile:	See Alpha Training and Development Centre
Last EER outcome:	At the previous external evaluation and review (EER) of Alpha Training (February 2016), NZQA was Highly Confident in the PTE's educational performance and in its capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	Certificate in Welding (Training Scheme) (Level 4)
MoE number:	8816
NZQA reference:	C36987
Dates of EER visit:	12 November 2019

Summary of Results

Alpha Training students gain an understanding of the standards required to undertake and achieve the training scheme certificate and industry-recognised certification. Ongoing review of the training would be strengthened through systematic analysis of the data collected.

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

- Almost all students are able to achieve their training goals, as shown by completions data.
- Alpha Training also provides training to local industry and community on an as-needs basis.
- There is value to the students in the development of required industry-related skills that enable recognisable certification and greater opportunity for employment. However, information providing an understanding of the value of the outcomes for other key stakeholders has not been systematically collected.

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Local industry input to the training is not sought.
- The programme delivery accommodates the needs of each student to minimise barriers to learning.
- Confirmation that the assessment is appropriate for the nature of the programme occurs when AS/NZS 2980 welding certification(s) examinations are undertaken. However, completed external moderation by standard-setting bodies did not meet assessment requirements. In addition, internal unit standard moderation is not occurring.
- The management team is closely involved in the daily operations of the education organisation. This enables the vision, purpose and direction of the organisation to be maintained.
- Data is collected and collated. Systematic review of this data to inform ongoing changes and improvements is not yet sufficiently comprehensive or embedded for NZQA to be confident in the self-assessment capability of Alpha Training at this time.

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- Lack of clarity associated to student related data, reporting and attendance raises questions connected to the meeting of NZQA and TEC rules.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Small numbers of students undertake this short-term, focussed welding training each year. The training programme is highly individualised, with most trainees obtaining both the training scheme qualification and one or more AS/NZS 2980 industry standard certifications as a result. Very few withdrawals occur as students who undertake the training do so because it is specific to their employment goals. The reason for the withdrawals is related to changes in personal circumstances.</p> <p>The flexibility in starting and undertaking the training has required a close monitoring of attendance and progress, resulting in a substantial amount of information being generated. The evaluators found some unexplained discrepancies in student-related data.²</p> <p>Though proportionally a small subset, the data provided shows Māori students achieving at the same rate as the other students (see Appendix 1).</p> <p>It was stated that 98 per cent of the students gained employment; however, whether this was a result of the training could not be substantiated due to the feedback being primarily anecdotal.</p>
	<p>Students choose this specialised programme as it offers an option to gain sound welding training, an industry-recognised certification and improved chances for employment. Most students qualify. Unexplained discrepancies in student related data require further investigation.</p>

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

² Discrepancies in calculated and reported efts, reported Māori intake numbers, attendance and completion dates. See Appendix 1

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

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Information is not sought regularly or consistently for the organisation to identify and know the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders. The following have led to this understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of graduates were said to have gained employment. This was solely based on unsolicited feedback from graduates who visit the organisation. It is also not supported by the requested informal survey³. A formalised process of understanding graduate destinations was not part of standard self-assessment. • Feedback from graduates, employers of these graduates and industry elements receiving recertification training is not systematically collected. • Advisory input appears to be limited to regular interaction with the Heavy Engineering Research Association. There is no formal or documented mechanism that gathers input from local industry about their needs. <p>An end-of-course student satisfaction survey is collected and sighted indicating that students are satisfied with the training received. Additional training in related areas⁴ is also commonly requested. The PTE indicates consideration of the feedback; however, evidence of self-assessment and subsequent actions was not provided.</p> <p>The academic staff spoke about transferrable skills, such as problem-solving and time management, being developed alongside practical industry skills. This is primarily anecdotal in nature and is not supported by gaining feedback from graduates and the related employers.</p>
Conclusion:	Alpha Training provides a specialised course that enables students to gain needed industry skills that improve their ability to gain industry-related employment in the local region. Methods

³ A survey of 59 per cent (10) of the 2018 students indicate that 70 per cent of these have gained employment, with about half of these were employed in a welding-related position.

⁴ Stainless Steel, TIG, Pipe and Alloy welding

	to gather key stakeholder feedback, in addition to the students', require development and implementation.
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1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The primary goal of students undertaking training with Alpha is to gain the AS/NZS 2980 certification; a requirement of the local employers when considering entry level, ready to work employees. The design and delivery of the training enables success for each student</p> <p>The individualised, self-paced approach to learning minimises barriers as students work through the material at their own pace, accessing the tutor for explanations when needed. Additionally, the tutor stays aware of the students' progress and will step in where needed to provide guidance and feedback on welding practice.</p> <p>The training scheme includes practical assessment material purchased from other developers. Pre-moderation was confirmed to have occurred through those developmental organisations, and external post-moderation has occurred with Competenz and NZQA. Most recent moderation has not met requirements and only the actions requested by NZQA have been addressed.</p> <p>Despite the major programme review undertaken in 2017, ongoing monitoring of the programme, such as internal moderation, is not evident. It is recognised that limited verification of assessor judgements occurs through a student's success in the AS/NZS 2980 examinations however, the validation of the assessment material against unit standard requirements is not occurring.</p>
Conclusion:	The design and delivery of the programme has evolved to meet the needs of each student through a highly individualised approach. The high number of students successfully undertaking the external certification examinations attests to the relative success of this approach. However, internal moderation to ensure students meet the full requirements of the unit standard

	is not occurring and requested external moderation actions are only partially completed.
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1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>There is no specific entry requirement to the training other than a desire to gain welding experience and qualifications. The enrolment procedure echoes the focus of the training organisation, enabling students to achieve. Potential students have the opportunity to inform the PTE at enrolment, of any attendance issues they have that will affect their training. Students also enrol throughout the year at times that best suit their personal circumstances. However, the subsequent effect on meeting the approved programme hours was not clearly evidenced.</p> <p>The programme’s flexibility extends through into training. Alpha closely monitors the students and adjusts the training to meet new time-related personal commitments as they arise. Again, the subsequent effect on meeting funded and approved programme hours was not clear.</p> <p>There is a prescribed pathway of topics in the training scheme. However, the flexible, highly individualised, self-paced approach each student can take to complete ensures their learning needs are met. The provision of a main tutor and an assistant tutor generally enables students to receive regular and ongoing feedback on their progress as required. To date, this has been a sustainable, inclusive approach as student numbers are relatively small.</p> <p>Feedback from graduates shows they feel supported and their learning and personal needs are accommodated. They can work at their own pace and capability even if there are other students in training at the same time.</p> <p>Local employers use Alpha as it is flexible in its provision of recertification opportunities. They praised the supportive nature of the organisation. This is echoed by some graduates who maintain informal contact with the PTE. However, this feedback is not regularly collected for review purposes.</p>

	At face value, student support and involvement with their learning appears to be effective. However, the apparent lack of related evidence gathering and subsequent review makes this difficult to substantiate.
Conclusion:	Throughout the training, students' needs are accommodated in an inclusive learning environment. Since the training is primarily practical, the students attain work-ready skills and knowledge. Graduates maintain contact with the organisation informally. The organisation has not reviewed the downstream effects of the flexible nature of the training.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Alpha is a family-owned organisation with a positive ethos of inclusion throughout the operation. The current managing director is still active in the organisation, but the daily running of the organisation is now undertaken by the next generation.</p> <p>An industry-qualified assistant tutor has been employed to enable the main tutor to also maintain a commercial enterprise which adds an extra dimension to the training.</p> <p>The organisation's vision and purpose is clear and reflected in scope of delivery. The organisation's direction currently centres around continuation of business-as-usual practices and responding to engineering and fabrication industry welding-related training needs. The 2015-2016 investment plan generally reflects on-site activities and conversations but does not appear to have been reviewed since it was first written. This indicates that the PTE is somewhat static. This is to an extent understandable given the small size and some challenging life events that have impacted staff more recently.</p> <p>Staff are valued. Tutorial staff have or are currently undergoing training to meet consent and moderation requirements. All welding-related training has been completed and is updated when recertification is required. Evidence was not provided that additional training was being undertaken by other staff.</p>
Conclusion:	Alpha Training is a small, family-owned and operated PTE providing specialised industry training to a community where

	there is an ongoing need. The organisation responds to requests to provide training, additional to its training scheme, when approached. However, the PTE appears to be static and primarily transactional in its interactions with external stakeholders. This lessens the opportunity to gauge how well it supports ongoing educational achievement.
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1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>There are areas of compliance where action is not occurring that affects the organisation's ability to meet relevant legislation and rules. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recesses taken within the 22-week training period, as well as periods of student absence and adjusted attendance schedules to meet personal commitments. How the organisation managed these changes to ensure students completed their training in the hours and weeks as approved by NZQA were not evidenced. • Internal moderation is not documented. • External moderation has been completed with Competenz and NZQA. Issues have been raised by both standard-setting bodies.⁵ However, the PTE has taken action to rectify only the issues raised by NZQA. • Credit reporting timeframes do not meet NZQA requirements⁶ (see Requirement 1). <p>Generally, efforts are made to manage the required compliance activities with a management system that lists when compliance activities are due and plans to meet these requirements. The organisation did comment that recent incidents had resulted in compliance activities not being completed in a timely manner but this was being addressed.</p>

⁵ Assessment material was not sighted and assessor judgements not verified.

⁶ 66 per cent of the credit achievement (2016-2019) was not reported within three months of assessment completion.

	At the time of the on-site visit, the PTE was completing a two-yearly review of its quality management system, with most procedures and policies appearing to remain unchanged.
Conclusion:	Alpha Training has methods in place to manage compliance requirements. However, the observed lack of activity and information analysis indicates that the organisation is unable to see areas that may need addressing.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Certificate in Welding level 4

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Alpha Training and Development Centre improve performance and use self-assessment to:

- Understand the discrepancies observed between the sources of student-related data.
- Review internal moderation processes to ensure students meet the requirements of the unit standard. Respond to the action plans requested by both standard-setting bodies.
- Analyse graduate destination data to better meet current and future needs of the stakeholders and community.
- Develop an external network of industry contacts who can advise on current practice and trends and the development of future training possibilities.
- Review the approved Training Scheme.
- Review NZQA Programme Approvals and Accreditation and TEC Funding Rules to align required practice with rules and regulations.

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 Alpha to:

1. Report, to NZQA, the credit achievement within three months of the completion of assessment of the unit standards that form the training scheme Certificate in Welding (Level 4) (Consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011 (v3-2018) – Part 2 – Maintaining consent and approval, 10.1 (b); Consent and Moderation

Requirements (CMR) Ref: 0013 – Industry or sector specific requirements for consent to assess, criterion 8 – Reporting).

Appendix 1

Table 1. Enrolment and achievement data

	Enrolled			Did not complete	Withdrawn	Qual completed	Numbers completing in less than 22 weeks ⁷
	Numbers	EFTS calculated	EFTS declared				
2017	22 ⁸	12.54	10		1	21/22 (95%)	4/22 (18%)
2018	17	9.69	12	1		16/17 (94%)	1/17 (6%)
2019	14	8.12	Not provided	4 ⁹	2	6/14 (43%) ¹⁰	1/14 (7%)

Table 2. Māori enrolment and achievement data

	Enrolled		Did not complete	Withdrawn	Qual completed
	Numbers from SMS data	Numbers from intake sheet			
2017	6	2			6/6 (100%)
2018	1	1			1/1 (100%)
2019	2	1	1		1/2 (50%)

⁷ Early completions occurring between 16 and 20 weeks (inclusive).

⁸ Nineteen enrolled initially throughout 2017, with three more enrolling in November 2017 and crossing over into 2018 (completed in 16 weeks).

⁹ Three students are still to complete – they will do so by end of 2019 or in 2020. Two more students have enrolled recently.

¹⁰ TEC data received for 2019 indicates 65 per cent pass rate.

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. 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. 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 fraud¹¹*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *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.*

¹¹ 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.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, training schemes and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz