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External Evaluation and Review Report

AG Challenge Limited trading as AGC
Training for Industry

Date of report: 22 December 2021

About AG Challenge Limited trading as AGC Training for Industry (AGC Training)

AGC Training delivers skills-based training in agriculture, construction and animal care to school students and job seekers in the Whanganui region.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	312 No 3 Line, RD12, Whanganui
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 50 equivalent full-time students on Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funded programmes plus 110 students on school partnership programmes Approximately 50 per cent of students are Māori and most are under 25 years of age ¹ International: nil
Number of staff:	Full-time: 18; part-time: six
TEO profile:	See AGC Training on the NZQA website
Last EER outcome:	The previous external evaluation and review (EER) in August 2019 resulted in judgements of Not Yet Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.

¹ Refer Appendix 1 for demographic breakdown of student enrolments.

Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Next Generation - Certificate in Milk Harvesting Technology (Level 3) ID: 120322²• Next Generation - Carpentry (Level 3) ID: 124370³
MoE number:	9294
NZQA reference:	C45371
Dates of EER visit:	5 and 6 October 2021

² Leads to the award of the New Zealand Certificate in Agriculture (Milk Harvesting) (Level 3) [Ref: 2216]

³ Leads to the award of New Zealand Certificate in Construction Trade Skills (Carpentry strand) (Level 3) [ref: 2834]

Summary of Results

Programmes are relevant and enable students to develop vocational skills which are sought after by employers. However, both educational performance and self-assessment capability are variable when viewed across programmes, and across the organisation.

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

- Retention of students on AGC Training programmes has improved in 2021, as have projected qualification completions. This is the result of a focussed effort by staff at all levels of the organisation.
- The PTE's long-term relationships with employers, schools and other stakeholders show that the outcomes for students are valued.

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Students in the construction focus area are highly engaged in their learning and experience a supportive learning environment. However, the evaluators found less effective programme delivery in the agriculture focus area.
- Courses are taught by staff who are qualified and experienced in their respective industries, and use that experience to ensure the education delivery is relevant. Many are new to teaching. A greater emphasis on teacher training has been recognised and is being addressed.
- The organisation has responded to substantial changes in the past year. Activities are now well staffed and resourced. However, some improvements and initiatives reported as addressed in response to the last EER have not been fully realised.
- In the past year, some academic self-assessment activity has been strengthened but is not yet fully embedded in the organisation. There is limited evidence yet to provide confidence that future self-assessment will continue to guide and inform improvements.

Key evaluation question findings⁴

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>AGC Training’s data shows that student achievement rates are improving, although the impact of Covid-19 disruptions throughout 2020 makes trend analysis difficult. Most students are now staying on their programmes and are on track to pass their qualifications. Programme and qualification completion rates across all programmes are, or are projected to be, above 80 per cent in 2021.⁵ Yet achievement rates for Māori students⁶ consistently lag behind non-Māori. Strategies to address this gap have been a work in progress for many years, with only minor improvement. Very few Pasifika students enrol, which reflects regional demographics.</p> <p>Students do projects and farm work on site at AGC Training, providing opportunities to practise their vocational skills and knowledge under supervision. This was particularly evident in the construction programme, where students spend approximately 30 hours per week building houses on site which are then transported off site and sold. There is less evidence of meaningful engagement in practical work outside of milking for agricultural students. Although the PTE indicated that students were engaged in farm work for 30 hours per week, this was not evident.</p> <p>Through their study, students are gaining valuable soft skills such as collaboration, communication, time management, work ethics. The PTE does not formally measure these gains.</p> <p>Students complete the TEC literacy and numeracy assessment tool at the beginning and end of their programmes. The PTE uses the resulting data for diagnostic purposes but does not include gains in literacy and numeracy in the student</p>

⁴ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation’s activities.

⁵ Refer Appendix 1 for achievement figures.

⁶ TES Priority Learners

	<p>achievement data used by AGC Training. There is an opportunity for better analysis and understanding of what works best.</p> <p>AGC Training has recently developed and is putting in place good systems to monitor and review individual student progress. They recognise and monitor the link between student attendance and achievement. AGC Training is beginning to collect data and has recently developed tools to guide self-assessment discussions. A new process for reporting educational progress and achievement to the leadership includes projecting the qualification completion result for every student. The PTE will need to undertake a greater depth of interrogation and analysis of this and other data and use it to derive actions to improve educational performance.</p>
Conclusion:	Students are beginning to be retained in study and show good progress in their study. Systems for thoroughly understanding and using achievement data to bring about improvements are still evolving.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students gain worthwhile skills in the programmes that AGC Training delivers, which enable students to gain employment and build a career in their chosen industry. The PTE also helps students to gain driver licences and achieve SiteSafe and ‘powder actuated tool’ certification (for construction students) – all of which are valuable employment credentials.</p> <p>Representatives of two secondary schools interviewed at this EER confirmed the value of the programmes to their students: it reinvigorates their engagement in education, and they gain valuable credits towards achieving NCEA.⁷</p> <p>Staff have informal and anecdotal information about some graduates and, generally, feedback from industry/stakeholders about graduates is positive. However, a more systematic</p>

⁷ National Certificate in Educational Achievement

	<p>understanding of graduate outcomes is essential to inform ongoing improvements to valued outcomes.</p> <p>While AGC Training gathers some exit data from students when they complete their programmes, there appears to be little meaningful engagement with employers and graduates to help determine the long-term value of the programmes, and inform improvements to programme design and delivery. This limitation was also identified in the 2019 EER. There has been no demographic analysis of employment outcomes to, for instance, determine outcomes for Māori graduates.</p>
Conclusion:	AGC Training needs to strengthen its analysis of data to draw valid conclusions about educational performance in relation to valued outcomes. There is an over-reliance on anecdotal feedback.

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

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>AGC Training’s programmes are designed to meet the needs of students and stakeholders by providing courses that are relevant to the students, employers and communities they serve. Workplace visits, work experience, guest speakers and project-based learning provide students with opportunities to apply their theoretical skills and knowledge to a real-world context. The organisation is well attuned to the needs of students through years of experience in the same market.</p> <p>Tutors also identify the aspirations and interests of their students through the learner success planning process discussed in 1.4 and, where possible, structure their teaching to align with those aspirations. This is intended to ensure that student learning needs are well met. However, this evaluation identified that one cohort of students considered that significant aspects of their programme were not meeting their needs well. Because the PTE is not using its process for listening to the student voice (see next paragraph), management was unaware of this dissatisfaction. This was amplified by the lack of a programme</p>

	<p>timetable or planning. It is unclear if this was caused by an over-emphasis on flexibility or a lack of planning.</p> <p>AGC Training has recently introduced a process of independently facilitated focus group discussions timed one month after the start, midway, and near the end of each programme. The intention of the process is sound: it is designed to listen to and record students' feedback on their experiences of different aspects of their courses, including content, delivery and staff effectiveness. The results of this feedback are then summarised so that systematic action can result. However, the process had not been applied in one of the two focus areas. There were also varied responses from staff when asked whether they had received the summaries of focus group discussions, and whether they had had a senior staff member debrief with them.</p> <p>There has been limited development in integrating teaching and learning embracing kaupapa Māori concepts as recommended in the last EER. However, relationships with Māori and iwi to support this are new, or are not yet formally established.</p> <p>Moderation was not well managed towards the end of 2019 and throughout 2020. This led to issues such as assessment evidence being incomplete, unreadable material relating to files that would not open, or damaged assessment tasks, all contributing to the PTE not meeting external moderation requirements including continuous non-compliant results for national external moderation (NEM) in 2019 and 2020.</p> <p>In January 2021, the moderation coordinator role was escalated to the new chief executive, and the PTE engaged an external consultant to work alongside staff to improve assessment and moderation processes. Assessment and moderation processes have improved as a result, a schedule of external and internal moderation is in place, and industry training organisation external moderation requirements are now largely being met. NEM moderation for 2021 had not yet taken place at the time of the EER.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>AGC Training is using its industry and community connections and relationships effectively to develop and deliver programmes designed to meet individual and stakeholder needs. However, the variable application of student feedback mechanisms limits AGC Training's ability to assess its effectiveness in meeting those needs.</p>

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Many students at AGC Training have previous poor experiences with education. At AGC Training, they receive active, integrated and ongoing support from staff at all levels of the organisation. Staff are attuned to the needs of students and endeavour to meet those needs on a day-to-day basis. AGC Training effectively communicates its expectations on attendance to the students and closely monitors attendance, with timely and appropriate follow-up as needed.</p> <p>The PTE provides a range of pastoral support services to minimise barriers for students. For instance, the PTE provides daily transport for students from the city to the campus, as well as daily breakfast, and supports students to gain their restricted driver licence.⁸</p> <p>Enhancements to student support services in the past year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointing a designated student and tutor support person who has a particular focus on pastoral care for students, support for literacy and numeracy skill development, and mentoring for tutors. • Appointing a full-time administration support role in January 2021 with a particular focus on assisting students and their whānau with enrolment decisions, assisting tutors to monitor 'at-risk' students, and reporting. • Appointing a tutorial assistant in construction to support tutors and students, and, as a female Māori and graduate of the programme, act as a role model for students. • Review and enhancement of the 'Learner Success Plan' process, which enables students to understand and set learning goals and staff to identify what support they need as an individual.

⁸ In 2020, AGC Training assisted 17 students to gain their driver licence and in 2021, seven students have been assisted and eight booked in for their driving test in the coming weeks.

	<p>Improved student retention and qualification completions in semester 1, 2021 indicate that these pastoral care processes and appointments are having a positive effect.</p> <p>AGC Training has completed a self-review of its implementation of the interim domestic Code⁹ and submitted an attestation to NZQA before 1 March 2021 as required. The self-review highlighted several areas for improvement which are being acted on.</p> <p>Staff across the organisation demonstrate a strong commitment to student success and discuss student progress daily and at weekly tutor meetings. Students can get follow-up support when they need it. Teaching staff spoke about how they share ideas, experiences and knowledge through their daily interactions and weekly staff meetings. A process to link some of the ideas brought out in these discussions into annual programme review would further strengthen this reflective process.</p>
Conclusion:	AGC Training has structured, client-friendly systems for the academic and pastoral care of its students. The organisation is providing a supportive learning environment to minimise learning barriers for its students.

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

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>AGC Training's organisational strategy is formally documented, and management and staff have a common understanding of the PTE's vision and direction. The PTE referred to a detailed improvement plan, compiled in response to the last EER. This plan was initially conceptual. The PTE did not formalise the plan and begin reporting on it until January 2021.</p> <p>The recent appointment of a chief executive, who was promoted from within the organisation, has brought about positive changes, many of which are still bedding in. Academic leadership is not yet showing evidence of the depth and range of experience necessary to lead the academic development of the</p>

⁹ The Education (Pastoral Care of Domestic Tertiary Students) Interim Code of Practice 2019

	<p>organisation, partly due to the previous learning and development manager leaving the organisation at short notice after only a few months of tenure – this position is vacant and being recruited to. In the short/medium term, the PTE has contracted external expertise to provide academic leadership support.</p> <p>Recent high managerial and academic staff turnover¹⁰ also risks the quality of education at the PTE. However, AGC Training has employed staff who are qualified and experienced in their respective industries and whom it is actively developing through their focus on building capability in teaching and assessment. Feedback from students during the EER highlighted a few negatives related to teaching practice in agriculture.</p> <p>The campus is very well supplied with physical and learning resources. Students, staff and external stakeholders commented favourably on this.</p> <p>The PTE encourages reflection on its role and how to continue to make ongoing and continuous improvements to how it meets the needs of students and other stakeholders. However, much of the self-assessment is informal and fragmented rather than systematic, strategic and informed by high-quality data across the organisation.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>AGC Training’s leadership has a clear vision and understanding of the business. The PTE is well resourced and is positioned well to enable student success and valued outcomes. New and improved management practices and systems for monitoring performance are still bedding in and yet to be fully realised.</p>

¹⁰ For example, the majority of teaching and support staff in the two focus areas had been with the organisation for less than one year.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The business and human resources manager oversees compliance. This is generally effective but not necessarily systematic or proactive, and it relies on one person.</p> <p>Although AGC Training meets most of its compliance requirements – for instance, in financial reporting, privacy, animal ethics, health and safety – their approach has led to some important compliance accountabilities being overlooked. For example, in three of the last four years, AGC Training has failed to meet reporting deadlines for unit standard results in approximately 25 per cent of cases. This is unacceptably high. It is a concern that the PTE was not aware of this non-compliance until it was raised at the EER, despite the PTE reporting that it had undertaken an internal audit in August 2020 to determine if processes and documented policies and procedures continued to comply with NZQA’s Rules.</p> <p>The PTE has submitted NZQA attestations and returns within required timeframes, and courses are being delivered consistent with NZQA approvals.</p> <p>After less than satisfactory assessment and moderation practice and compliance in 2019 and 2020, the PTE is now meeting consent and moderation requirements and meets requirements for participation in industry training organisation moderation activities.</p>
Conclusion:	AGC Training has some gaps in its understanding of its key compliance accountabilities. Some requirements have not been met.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Next Generation - Certificate in Milk Harvesting Technology (Level 3)

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Conclusion:	Actual and projected qualification completion has improved in 2021. Employment outcomes are high, as they should be in this employment-rich sector. Some students who were interviewed were concerned about shortcomings in timetabling and planning. This is a disconnect between the management view and the actual student view, so the PTE needs to focus on student experience and gathering accurate, timely information on student experience of the programme.

2.2 Next Generation - Carpentry (Level 3)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Conclusion:	Retention has improved in this programme in 2021, and projected qualification completion is over 90 per cent. Student and stakeholder needs are being well met, and indications are that employment and apprenticeship numbers will be strong. The programme model provides a realistic workplace context for active learning, and further enables students to grasp the theory requirements. These students are well supported and report high satisfaction with the teaching.

Recommendations

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

NZQA recommends that AG Challenge Limited:

- Continue to develop the collection of data for self-assessment, and build organisation-wide capability in analysing and using this data.
- Continue to strengthen capability in internal and external moderation processes and assessment practice.
- Develop stronger processes to understand, monitor, review and respond to important compliance requirements.
- Implement processes to engage with graduates and graduate employers to enable a greater understanding of both the value gained and for continued programme development purposes.
- Continue to strengthen self-assessment and improvement strategies in relation to achieving strong outcomes for Māori learners.
- Consider strategies to increase capability in academic leadership.

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 AG Challenge Limited to:

- Accurately report credits for students within three months of assessment.¹¹

¹¹ As required under Assessment Standards Rules 2021, Part 2, 13/1 b - made under section 452 of the Education and Training Act 2020. Refer <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/standards-and-assessment-rules/consent-to-assess/>

Appendix 1

Table 1. Student demographics, semester 1 2021

	NZC Construction Trade Skills L3	Rural Animal Tech L5	Animal Care L3	NZC Agriculture L3	Total
Total	23	10	8	15	56
Male	18	0	2	11	31
Female	5	10	6	4	25
Māori	13	2	2	9	26
Pasifika	2	0	0	2	4
19-25 yr old	12	8	1	3	24
Youth (18 and under)	4	0	2	7	13

Table 2. Projected qualification completions for 2021 as at 1 October 2021*

	Enrolled	Withdrawn	Completed	Projected to complete	Projected completion %
NZC Agriculture L3	49	3	9	36	92%
Animal Care L3	11	0	8	3	100%
Rural Animal Tech L5	14	2	1	11	86%
NZC Construction Trade Skills L3	28	3	5	20	89%
Total	102	8	23	70	91%

* Based on updated data provided by AGC Training Ltd at the EER. Projected completion is the PTE's assessment based on student progress to date.

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 fraud¹²
- 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.

¹² 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