

1 August 2018

redacted s9(2)(a)

Email: redacted s9(2)(a)

Dear redacted s9(2)(a)

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your request of 19 July 2018, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), for the information listed below. This request followed receipt of NZQA's response of 13 July 2018 to an earlier OIA request.

*"...the [External Evaluation and Review] reports for
Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre
Best Pacific Institute of Education."*

Please find enclosed the External Evaluation and Review (EER) reports you have requested.

- There are three EER reports for Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre that are dated 27 October 2010, 7 May 2014 and 11 January 2018.
- There are two EER reports for BEST Pacific Institute of Education that are dated 27 July 2010 and 23 February 2015.

No redactions have been made to these documents as they have been previously published and are thus public record.

For any enquiries please contact redacted s9(2)(a), Senior Advisor, Office of the Chief Executive on 04 463 redacted s9(2)(a) by email at redacted s9(2)(a).

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you also have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington.

Yours sincerely



Karen Poutasi (Dr)
Chief Executive



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MAHA TĪHĪ HĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Report of External Evaluation and Review

BEST Pacific Institute of Education
Limited

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Date of report: 27 July 2010

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MoE Number: 9872
NZQA Reference: C01506
Date of EER visit: 10 May 2010

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.

Brief description of TEO

Location: Head Office, 5 Hugh Brown Drive, New Lynn, Auckland

Type: Private training establishment

Size: 2,164 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)

Sites: There are five sites in Auckland:

- Waitakere Tertiary College: 3-5 Hugh Brown Drive, New Lynn
- Manukau Tertiary College: 2 Ryan Place, Manukau
- Youth Campus South Auckland: 5 Ryan Place, Manukau
- Youth Campus West Auckland: 72 Delta Avenue, New Lynn
- Pacific Institute of Performing Arts: Unitec New Zealand, Mt Albert.

BEST Pacific Institute of Education (BEST) began operating in West Auckland in 1988, gaining registration with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in 1995. BEST is a self-identified Pasifika provider and has a distinct focus to serve Pasifika communities which is reflected in the demographics of the student body and staff. Seventy-five per cent of BEST's students are Pasifika, with the majority of them Samoan. Approximately 20 per cent of BEST's students are Māori and a large percentage of the total student body is female. BEST offers both face-to-face and distance options for study. Eighty per cent of BEST's students choose to study through the distance-learning option.

BEST offers a range of certificate and diploma programmes from levels 1-5. The majority of the students are enrolled in the business school programmes which include:

- National Diploma in Business
- National Diploma in Computing
- Certificate in Business Administration
- Certificate in Freight Forwarding
- Certificate in Information Technology

- Certificate in Retail and Business
- Certificate in Tourism and Travel.

Other programmes include the certificate and two-year Diploma in Performing Arts taught by the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts (PIPA). A free four-week SAMA school is also run through PIPA.

BEST offers a range of level 1-3 Targeted Funding programmes for Youth and Training Opportunities programme learners. Youth Guarantee programmes, from levels 1-4, are also available. A new addition to the range of study options is the Certificate in Pre-Teacher Education, which staircases learners into the Bachelor of Education at other providers.

BEST's model of delivery includes the role of course directors who are allocated to learners on their enrolment. Course directors have a pastoral care and support role. They ensure learners are clear about their goals and meet their study deadlines, and they support learners to overcome any barriers to successful programme completion. BEST People – Careers and Employment is another centre of activity that is significant to BEST which supports learners with career planning and placement into work.

BEST was previously quality assured by NZQA under the audit system. At its most recent audit, in 2005, the school met all requirements of Quality Assurance Standard One, the standard then in force.

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Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **BEST Pacific Institute of Education Limited**.

BEST is focused on educational achievement and rates are high, especially when benchmarked against national averages for Māori and Pasifika learners. For example, BEST's course completion rate for 2009 was 84 per cent for 2009 and compares with a national average rate for course completion for Pasifika students of 54 per cent for those enrolled in certificates and 64 per cent for those enrolled in diploma programmes.¹ Rates have improved steadily over the past few years.

BEST achieves excellent outcomes for the community and for its learners. BEST has a strong focus on providing graduates with a qualification that will enhance their opportunities to engage effectively in the New Zealand economy. For 2009, 83.7 per cent of BEST's graduates moved into positive outcomes: employment (69.7 per cent) and further training or education (14 per cent). There is strong evidence that learners gain vocational-specific knowledge and skills, transferable skills, and increased confidence, which improve employability. There is also evidence emerging to show a significant increase in graduates' salaries following study at Best.

BEST offers on-campus learning, although most of the learners choose distance learning which enables them to study while maintaining work and family commitments. The distance-learning model uses an engaging online platform and ensures learners remain connected to the organisation through the face-to-face component and regular personalised guidance and support. The model also ensures face-to-face connectivity and support among peers.

Pasifika communities feel a strong connection to the learning and the outcomes of BEST. The positive outcomes for learners have an impact on their families and wider communities (including intergenerational learning). The strongly Pasifika nature of BEST is fundamental, and the celebration and affirmation of the different cultures that make up the Pacific is clear throughout the organisation and reflected in the way BEST engages and celebrates success.

¹ Ministry of Education (2009) *Education Counts: Retention and Achievement: Passing Courses*. Retrieved 26.5.2010 from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/retention_and_achievement

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **BEST Pacific Institute of Education Limited**.

Achievement and retention rates are closely monitored for every intake for every programme, set against organisational and external targets and tracked and monitored regularly. Learner feedback is collected systematically and this feedback is regularly reviewed in programme and curriculum meetings.

BEST has good links with various communities and regularly consults with them both formally and informally. There is clear evidence that positive innovations result from consultation. New developments are informed by careful analysis and planning and are monitored carefully for their impact. There is a strong vision which is articulated clearly across the organisation.

BEST is a large, complex, multi-site organisation with consistent policies and processes and robust systems in place. The information collected through the student management system aligns with each centre's key performance indicators. The clarity of information and processes means that minor issues identified by the external evaluation and review team had already been revealed by the organisation's self-assessment processes, and plans are in place to gather further information to respond effectively.

TEO response

BEST acknowledges that this is a comprehensive and thorough report but does not agree with the rating of "good" for capability in self-assessment in section 1.1. *How well do learners achieve* on the rating of "good" for capability in self-assessment in the focus areas *BEST People Careers and Employment* and the *National Diploma in Business*. All the evidence has been discussed in depth with BEST. NZQA remains sure of the evidence and logic through which the original judgements were reached.

Basis for External Evaluation and Review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

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).

Findings

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

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

For the external evaluation and review, the following mandatory focus area was chosen:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

Other focus areas were chosen to represent vertical and horizontal dimensions of the organisation. Focus areas that run across the organisation included:

- Distance learning: Fresh- e
- BEST People – Careers and Employment (BEST People)

The range of programmes selected included:

- National Diploma in Business (Level 5)
- Certificate in Tourism and Travel (Level 3)
- Diploma in Performing Arts (Level 5)
- Youth Training Waitakere (Levels 1-3).

Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Learners at BEST are achieving well. BEST is focused on educational achievement for Pasifika Peoples. Concern and an awareness of the underachievement of Pasifika Peoples in mainstream education have spurred the organisation to find an approach to education that works to address this. Across the diploma and certificate programmes the average rates of qualification achievement for 2009 sit at 62.8 per cent. This compares with a national average rate of achievement of 40 per cent for Pasifika learners enrolled in certificates and 34 per cent for those enrolled in diplomas.² BEST's rates of achievement have been steadily improving over the last few years which the organisation attributes to the improved delivery of e-learning and the improved support given to the distance-learning students.

BEST's course completion rate is 84 per cent for 2009. This rate has also been steadily improving and compares with a national average rate for course completion for Pasifika students of 54 per cent for those enrolled in certificates and 64 per cent for those enrolled in diploma programmes.³ Achievement rates are closely monitored for every intake and programme and are set against organisational and external targets and tracked and monitored regularly. The collection and reporting of data for different purposes means that at times the organisation's own understanding of its achievement rates needs clarification. The organisation is aware of this issue and is working internally and externally to streamline processes.

BEST aims to equip learners with useful qualifications as well as confidence and skills which can enhance their lives and the lives of their families and communities. The evaluation team heard many examples of how learners had acquired new skills, knowledge, and confidence which enhanced their lives and the lives of their families. For example, the

² Ministry of Education (2009) *Education Counts: Retention and Achievement: Gaining Qualification*. Retrieved 26.5.2010 from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/retention_and_achievement

³ Ministry of Education (2009) *Education Counts: Retention and Achievement: Passing Courses*. Retrieved 26.5.2010 from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/retention_and_achievement

evaluation team gathered clear evidence of learners gaining useful transferable skills, including improved literacy and numeracy, computing skills, customer service skills, and an understanding of the retail industry. Other examples included job interview skills, presentation skills, and curriculum vitae preparation.

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 **Excellent**.

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

BEST achieves excellent outcomes for the community and for its learners. BEST has a strong focus on providing graduates with a qualification that will enhance their opportunities to operate effectively in the New Zealand economy. The establishment of BEST People is closely aligned with enhancing the vocational goal achievements for learners. The key performance indicators for this centre mean the destinations of BEST graduates are closely tracked. For 2009 BEST People tracked 83.7 per cent of its graduates into either employment (69.7 per cent) or further training or education (14 per cent). For the National Diploma in Business, 76.6 per cent of graduates have found employment and 7.6 per cent have gone on to further training. These results are attributed to close links with employers and the support and guidance given to graduates. Longer term tracking of alumni has begun and one of the early findings shows a significant increase in graduates' salaries after graduation.

A number of Pasifika communities feel a strong connection to the learning and the outcomes of BEST. The evaluation team heard from key members of several communities who described the link they felt to the mission and values of the organisation. In many cases, the outcomes for learners are inextricably linked to their families and wider community. In 2006 BEST began a consultation process with over 80 Pasifika churches in the West and South Auckland. A more recent engagement included a research project which conducted face-to-face surveys and focus groups with students and members of the communities of West and South Auckland. A number of outcomes have resulted from BEST's engagement with Pasifika communities including the establishment of the pre-teacher certificate programme to build the number of Pasifika teachers, and the establishment of the distinctly Pasifika PIPA.

Māori form a significant body of the student population and are achieving valuable outcomes through their education at BEST. A proactive strategy to appoint Māori staff is reflected and the distinct place that Māori hold as tangata whenua is acknowledged in policy documents. Recent developments with the student management system will enable the organisation to affirm that it is meeting its goals for Māori student achievement.

The family is central to the learners and the distance-learning option means that many families are connected to the learning. The evaluation team heard examples of a "ripple" effect, where family members were drawn to education having watched the example of other family members. The distance-learning option also means the learner is supplied with a computer and an internet connection for the duration of their study. The positive impact

of the computer going into the home and the enhanced information technology skills every learner gains were widely reported by staff and students.

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

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

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

The distance-learning model used by BEST matches learners' needs through enabling them to combine working or caring for their families with study. Learners remain engaged in their learning through the combination of the Fresh-e delivery platform and the eight hours per week on-campus component of the courses. The evaluation team heard many examples of learners who would not have been able to take up the option of study if the distance-learning model was not available. From its inception in 2002, the e-learning online option is now taken up by 80 per cent of BEST's learners. There are ongoing developments to the Fresh-e platform to ensure that it best matches the needs of learners and tutors.

BEST maintains links with business and industry and relevant industry training organisations to ensure that the training is relevant and matches employer needs. The evaluation team heard examples of the content of programmes being adjusted to match the needs of industry better. For example, for the Certificate in Travel and Tourism, new software has been introduced to match the needs of industry. The evaluation team also learned of new qualifications being developed to fill gaps in training.

The range of programmes offered by BEST shows an awareness of the needs of the communities, and the programmes, from foundation level to diploma, are meeting the needs of the community. For example, BEST offers a range of Youth Training and Youth Guarantee programmes which enable learners who are no longer engaged in compulsory education to continue their study. Having their culture affirmed, together with individual attention, helps break down a barrier to learning that some experienced at other education institutes.

PIPA is another example of a programme established to match the needs of the community. Prior to the programme being offered by PIPA, Pasifika Peoples lacked a venue where their culture could be affirmed and celebrated while engaging with the performing arts. PIPA is engaged with the wider performing arts industry and placing graduates into work.

BEST regularly consults with the wider community and learners. The course directors are an effective feedback mechanism for learners, and anonymous feedback is collected at the end of each programme. This feedback informs regular programme and curriculum reviews. Close monitoring of retention and achievement data also enables management to identify any issues with the programmes. The recent research undertaken with the wider community has been analysed and is being workshopped with the different work teams at BEST.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Across the diverse range of programmes offered by BEST Pacific, tutors are employed with good knowledge and first-hand experience relevant to their programme. For example, tutors for the Certificate in Tourism and Travel must meet the industry training organisation requirement of a minimum five years' industry experience before being employed. Tutors who work in PIPA are all working in performing arts and can give students first-hand experience of the industry. The evaluation team heard from students who valued the real-life examples and expectations being brought into the classroom.

Tutors are supported in their roles with a comprehensive performance management process which identifies tutors' strengths and areas which need development. Professional development targets these areas; for example, many tutors are participating in ongoing workshops about e-learning. Assessing and moderating with unit standards was another focus for some tutors. National external moderation results have been improving and the organisation is working to ensure consistency.

There are curriculum team meetings every six weeks and regular programme management meetings to ensure issues are discussed and resolved. The evaluation team heard of examples of improvements being made to both content and assessment as a result of these reviews. For example, the Certificate in Travel and Tourism moved to using Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organisation (ATTTO) assessments, which were written more clearly and were easier for the learners to understand. Another example included new resources and games to support the development of literacy and numeracy for youth in the targeted funded programmes.

Positive relationships exist between the tutors and students. Learners spoke of tutors going the extra mile and supporting learners with one-to-one support when necessary, often in the weekends and for as long as it takes. Learners were comfortable giving feedback about tutors and have regular opportunities to do so. Issues are readily raised with the learners' course director. The course director can work with the learner and tutor to resolve the issue and this occurs in the majority of cases. When appropriate, the issue is referred to a manager.

The distance-learning option is favoured by 80 per cent of BEST's learners. BEST attributes the steady increase in learner achievement to the development of e-learning and the delivery platform, Fresh-e. To ensure learners stay engaged with learning there is an on-campus requirement which requires learners to attend two evenings a week plus catch-up/additional support opportunities on Saturday mornings. Learners attested to the importance of this face-to-face component. The Fresh-e online platform is engaging and interactive and learners use the discussion and message boards to engage with their tutors and other learners. All tutors who work with distance learners participate in ongoing professional development with a focus on ensuring that the content and delivery remains student-centred in this new mode.

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 **Excellent**.

Learners who study with BEST are given good guidance and support. On enquiry, learners are invited to an interview by enrolment staff. Evidence shows that the quality of these interviews has varied, resulting in a few learners not getting the information they required. However, the majority of learners reported that the enrolment interview was helpful in advising them on an appropriate path of study. Once enrolled, learners are invited to an orientation (which they described as extremely informative) to introduce them to their course director, tutors, and the facilities.

The organisation ensures learners stay on track with their study through close monitoring of attendance, regular contact, and personalised responses to issues that arise. All learners are assigned to a course director whose performance is linked to ensuring learners' retention. All learners have a one-to-one session with their course director every six weeks to check their progress against goals set at the beginning of the programme.

Course directors contact learners who have been absent and liaise with their tutors to ensure they stay up to date with course work. Course directors will visit learners at home and liaise with the family if necessary. If a learner has a serious pastoral care issue they can be referred to the in-house student counsellor or to an appropriate alternative agency.

The guidance and support by the employment activity centre, BEST People, begins midway through the learners' programme and continues after the end of the programme to support learners to find further employment or appropriate study. BEST People assesses learners' work readiness and provides support to develop interview, curriculum vitae, and presentation skills. When the learner is considered ready for employment, the centre liaises with the learner to find work-placement or job opportunities. The current economic recession has made it difficult to place learners in work, although learners told the evaluation team that the centre was still in contact with them, offering them support, months after their study had concluded.

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

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

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

Two directors and the head of school are responsible for the governance of BEST. Their vision and values underpin the strategic direction and resourcing decisions. Planned growth and development align well with BEST's mission and guiding principles. Examples of significant investment decisions, developed to match learner needs, include the growth of the Manukau campus and the ongoing work on the Fresh-e-learning platform. The evaluation team heard the mission and vision articulated consistently and passionately across the organisation.

The governance team is consultative and has established strategic links with key stakeholders. A willingness to engage across relevant stakeholder groups was evident and the engagement ranges from questioning to advocacy. The evaluation team heard of willingness to commission and participate in research and to form alliances with other educational organisations if they aligned with BEST's goals and pedagogy.

The strongly Pasifika nature of BEST is fundamental and there is a clear strategy to appoint and develop Pasifika and Māori leaders within the organisation. The celebration and affirmation of the different cultures which make up the Pacific is clear throughout the organisation and reflected in the way BEST engages and celebrates success.

Management meets regularly to monitor the organisation's performance against benchmarks which have been set both internally and by external agencies. The student management system allows the leadership team to analyse results across the different programmes, across the different intakes, and over time. When data indicates areas for concern, there are clear processes in place which enable managers to seek explanations and solutions.

BEST has a strong focus on achieving positive outcomes for learners and staff and for developing a culture of achievement. Performance management supports staff to develop and many are encouraged to engage in further education. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and about policies and processes. They feel supported by management and welcome the input they have into decision-making.

Although BEST is a large, complex, multi-sited organisation, policies and processes are clear and consistent and robust systems are in place. The information collected through the student management system aligns with each centre's key performance indicators. The clarity of this information and these processes means that issues highlighted by this external evaluation and review had already been revealed by the organisation's self-assessment processes and plans were in place to gather more information and respond accordingly.

Part 2: Performance in 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 **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

For information on this focus area see section 1.6.

2.2 Focus area: Fresh-e/e-learning

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**

BEST has struck a good balance in terms of its blended e-learning approach. Fresh-e has met a significant community need, with 80 per cent of BEST's learners choosing this method of blended learning.

Most learners interviewed indicated that they had specifically enrolled and continued to study at BEST (often after withdrawing from other institutions) because of the flexibility of Fresh-e. Learners can study while continuing to undertake employment to support themselves and raise their families ("earn while you learn" strategy) and minimise student loan debt. Study is no longer prohibitive because learners avoid daily travel time and costs and they can continue to meet family and childcare responsibilities.

A number of students indicated that they would have been excluded from further education without this flexible e-learning option and were not aware of other providers offering e-learning in a similar form to Fresh-e. BEST's loan of computers and free provision of internet connections for the duration of enrolment has also made e-learning study possible for many students who lacked access to computers. Tutors refer to high retention rates in the National Diploma of Business as indicative of how learners' needs are being met.

BEST's focus on ensuring that learners receive their computers promptly upon enrolment also means that learners are not delayed in commencing their studies (80 per cent of students receive their computers within two weeks of enrolment).

Students feel supported from the outset of their study. Their level of computer knowledge is assessed at orientation to identify support needs, and several face-to-face classes are provided to demonstrate Fresh-e, ensuring students are sufficiently prepared before studying off-campus. Learners frequently use the one-to-one and extra classes that tutors make available for further support in a particular area of study. Tutors provide work schedules and timetables which guide learners in terms of the time they need to set aside at home to study. Prompt support is provided by BEST's information technology team, ensuring learning is not compromised due to technical IT issues.

Learners find Fresh-e engaging, personalised, and accessible. They are frequently engaged by their tutors and other learners via online chatlines and message boards. Students find the ability to ask and respond to questions via the online message board an additional support to their learning. Even the shyest person is emboldened to ask questions, find answers, and therefore get more out of their learning.

2.3 Focus area: BEST People – Careers and Employment

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

Engagement with BEST People is included as part of the curriculum for a significant number of BEST's learners. For the remainder of BEST's learners, the workshops and one-to-one support are a free service. BEST People's internal targets are to place 65 per cent of graduates into employment and 10 per cent in further training or education. The current economic recession has been a difficult time to place graduates into work and so the centre struggled to meet its targets in 2009. However, at the time of the evaluation visit, 69.7 per cent of 2009 graduates had been placed in work and 14 per cent were engaged in further training.

The service is tailored to each learner and works to support learners with career planning and placement into work. A recent development has been moving to online tools to streamline processes. Services include the development of a career action plan, curriculum vitae, job interview skills, and links to organisations like Dress for Success.

BEST People has established networks with a range of employers who regularly request graduates for work placements. Support and feedback loops are in place between Best People and the employer and the learner to review each placement. A work placement is useful for the employer and for the graduate. At times, the work placement can be the graduate's first experience of employment. The evaluation team heard evidence that a significant number of work placements lead to permanent employment. Employers also advised the team of the high regard in which they hold the skills and attributes BEST learners bring to the workplace.

The centre has been through a number of reviews and has recently had an increase in the number of staff and a dedicated manager appointed to oversee the centre. For a period prior to this, staff numbers did not allow for the amount of engagement BEST desired for its learners. The greater resource is being aimed at increasing links with industry and securing more work placements. Another recent initiative has been to track graduates at one, three, and five years after graduating from BEST. Although tracking has just begun, initial data indicates a significant increase in income post-graduation.

2.4 Focus area: Certificate in Tourism and Travel (Level 3)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

This programme's achievement rate is about 70 per cent. This has increased significantly over the last few years. BEST attributes this improvement to ongoing review and improvements to the programme concurrent with the shift to Fresh-e. Many learners enrol in the programme with a goal to work in the travel industry. There was good evidence that during the course of their study learners' horizons and employment strategies are expanded as the range of employment possibilities becomes clear. The evaluation team heard of learners gaining important computing and customer service skills which improved their confidence and employability.

This is an entry-level qualification and learners are supported with literacy and numeracy teaching. For example, when appropriate, learners are given strategies to support them to build vocabulary and confidence in writing. The shift to using ATTO resources means the language of assessment has been simplified, supporting learners to achieve.

The content of the course has been improved to match industry preferences, including a recent change in ticketing software. Tutors bring real-world experience into the classroom from their own work history and continued connections within the industry. To meet industry training organisation requirements, tutors must have a minimum of five years' industry experience before being employed. A recent highlight for learners was a field trip to Rotorua. For some, it was their first experience of being a tourist.

The graduate employment rate for 2009 was 67.1 per cent, and the number of graduates going on to further study has increased 11.9 per cent.

2.5 Focus area: Diploma in Pacific Performing Arts (Level 5)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

The Diploma in Pacific Performing Arts is a two-year, level 5 programme, run under the umbrella of the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts (PIPA) which provides students with practical skills and experience in traditional and contemporary Pasifika performance, acting, dance, Pacific history, and theatre studies. The programme has become a hub for casting agents and directors to use as one of their first ports of call when casting Pasifika people. Students have been cast in a variety of plays, film, and television projects and dance productions.

PIPA has the option of a summer school which many students take up prior to enrolling. This is valuable in ensuring that students gain a clear outline of what the programme involves, and any potential barriers to learning can be identified. Many students undertake the level 3 Certificate in Screen and Performing Arts prior to enrolling on the diploma because it provides a broad foundation and a "taster" to the diploma.

There are high retention rates and for the 2009 year there was a 74 per cent graduation rate. Casting agents recognise the calibre of students and the passion for the work they are doing for the craft and for the industry.

The programme is well designed to match the needs of learners and the industry. Of particular note is the focus on culture, where all students are encouraged to explore their cultural identity through the performing arts. This course has attracted high-calibre teaching staff who, students report, utilise effective teaching methods. Assessment of student progress is in the form of productions which includes industry feedback on student performance.

There is strong support for students. Students and tutors report, “it is like a family here”, whereby students are well looked after and value the connections they make with industry representatives.

The teaching staff reported that they feel well supported by governance and management, the course director reports directly to the managing director, who also has a passion for the arts and has allowed this course to develop its own identity.

2.6 Focus area: National Diploma in Business (Level 5)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

The National Diploma in Business is BEST’s highest level qualification. Achievement rates for 2009 are at 66.4 per cent, and over 84 per cent of these graduates move into employment or further training.

Pre-entry criteria are used to ensure that learners can engage with the content of the diploma programme, with many learners joining the programme after completing one of BEST’s level 3 certificates.

Like most of BEST’s programmes, the majority of learners choose to study by distance. For these learners, the evaluation team heard that the message and discussion boards were used regularly by learners to pose and answer questions. The peer-to-peer support these channels provide was valued by the learners. There are evening face-to-face teaching sessions twice-weekly, and for those who still need support, one-to-one tuition and Saturday catch-up sessions are available.

Learners told the evaluation team that since commencing the diploma they have been able to set career and further study goals and feel confident and supported in their ability to realistically achieve these goals.

Tutors are well supported and have good experience which they bring to the classroom. Ongoing development has resulted in BEST meeting external moderation requirements. Learners spoke of feeling well prepared for assessments and this is supported by tutors using a range of exemplars prior to assessment.

A number of organisations regularly take graduates for work-placement opportunities. Some of these placements have resulted in full-time employment. The feedback from employers indicates that graduates have useful knowledge and skills which can be of immediate use in the workplace.

2.7 Focus area: Youth West

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

This centre offers one of Best's targeted funded programmes. Youth West operates from its own campus in West Auckland. The programme allows learners to move through a number of level 1 and 2 certificates during their time with BEST. The centre has high rates of credit achievement and a significant number of learners achieve qualifications. The programme is effective at meeting eight-week labour market outcomes of over 70 per cent.

The learners at Youth West are described as "students with promise", and the culture of achievement, evident throughout BEST, is significant for these young learners. Tutors work with learners on future planning and are clear that learners should focus on not just a job but also a career. Barriers to learning previously experienced are broken down as learners feel valued and comfortable in a holistic learning environment within which culture, spirituality, and family are embedded and affirmed. Family are encouraged to be part of the learner's journey from enrolment and are invited to collaborate with Youth West to ensure learners stay on track with their studies. Learners reported that their relationships with their families improved and that they were clearer about career options and future study.

The model of delivery at Youth West supports the younger learners, with the young people staying with the same tutor every day, all week. The evaluation team heard from some ex-Youth West students of guidance and support continuing well after they had left BEST. Extra support is provided by a literacy and numeracy tutor and a student counsellor.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's regular scheduling policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

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Report of External Evaluation and Review

**BEST Pacific Institute of Education
Limited**

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 23 February 2015

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MoE Number: 9872
NZQA Reference: C16567
Date of EER visit: 4-7 November 2014

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:	BEST Pacific Institute of Education Limited (BEST)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Main campus (Waitakere) Level 1, Hugh Brown Drive, New Lynn, Auckland
Delivery sites:	Sites at Waitakere, Manukau, Avondale and Papatoetoe
First registered:	1995
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate in Employment Skills (Level 1)• Certificate in Health, Recreation and Sport (Level 2)• Certificate in Business, Enterprise and Technology (Levels 2 and 3)• Certificate in Business Administration (Level 4)• National Diploma in Business (Level 5)• Certificate in Freight Administration (Level 3)• Certificate in Freight Forwarding (Level 4)• Certificate in Information Technology (Level 4)• Diploma in Computing (Level 5)• Certificate in Retail and Computing (Level

2)

- Certificate in Retail and Business (Level 4)
- Certificate in Tourism and Services (Level 2)
- Certificate in Travel, Tourism and Technology (Level 3)
- Certificate in Tourism and Travel (Level 3)
- Certificate in Performance and Performing Arts Technology (Level 2)
- Certificate in Screen and Performing Arts (Level 3)
- Diploma in Pacific Performing Arts (Level 5)
- Certificate in Foundation Education (Teaching) (Level 4)
- Certificate in Christian Studies (Level 3)

Code of Practice signatory: Yes

Number of students: At the time of the external evaluation and review (EER):

Domestic: 2,149 equivalent full-time students (EFTS) (from over 3,300 enrolments), of whom 52 per cent are under 25 years of age; 68 per cent identify primarily as Pasifika, 36 per cent identify as Māori, and 14 per cent as European/Asian/Other (students often self-report more than one ethnicity)

International: currently no international students

Number of staff: 181 full-time equivalents, with 111 of these in teaching roles

Scope of active accreditation: BEST has an extensive range of consents to assess up to and including level 6. See: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=987294007>

Distinctive characteristics: BEST's stated mission is 'to work with Pacific people to fulfil the educational, vocational and business aspirations of Pacific communities, by providing quality educational programmes that responsively and effectively meet their learning

and career needs'. Since its inception in 1988, BEST has grown to become the largest Pasifika-dedicated education and training organisation in New Zealand. It is the largest single-entity PTE in Auckland.

BEST is organised into six 'schools', which are in order of scale: School of Business, Computing and Enterprise; BEST Youth Academy; Pacific Institute of Performing Arts; School of Workforce Development; LOGOS Pacific Institute of Christian Studies; BEST Pasifika Leadership Academy.

Eighty per cent of BEST programme delivery is to students studying at level 4 or above.

In 2001, BEST introduced e-learning to give students the opportunity to study online, and in 2007 further developed this initiative by launching a dedicated e-learning portal, called Fresh-e. Numerous programmes now include a blended-learning option, and uptake by students is increasing steadily.

BEST also operates a careers and employment centre (BEST People) staffed by trained employment brokers and career consultants who provide career guidance and facilitate work-based training placements for students, and broker employment for graduates.

Recent significant changes:

In July 2014, BEST gained NZQA approval for a new delivery site located on Puhinui Road, Manukau.

Previous quality assurance history:

The last EER occurred in 2010. NZQA was Highly Confident in both the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of BEST.

BEST was subject to a routine audit by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in July 2013. A few relatively minor non-compliances were identified and three recommendations made. These related to accuracy in information for the Single Data Return. BEST has maintained their funding level since the last EER, and as a result of increased Youth Guarantee funding being made available has grown significantly under that funding stream.

New Zealand Qualifications Framework standards

managed by NZQA form the major part of BEST's curriculum. Currently this includes 19 systems, and a total of 227 standards were included in the PTE's 2014 assessment plan. This also includes some NCEA achievement standards. External moderation results for 19 standards assessed during 2013 found that 12 met national moderation requirements, four required modification before re-use, and one computing standard was 'not approved', not meeting requirements for the second year in succession. The learner evidence for three of six samples relating to the literacy and numeracy system assessments were accepted. BEST was required to provide NZQA with an improvement plan, and was also directed to the NZQA Assessment and Moderation BEST Practice Workshops in 2014.¹

BEST is compliant with industry training organisation external moderation requirements. All assessor decisions relating to the 17 standards selected for external moderation in 2013 were accepted.

Other:

Following programme review in 2013, the School of Business, Computing and Enterprise (SBCE) introduced two 'delivery frameworks', Niu Malaga and Whanau Fala, into the TEC Student Achievement Component (SAC)-funded SBCE programmes. These are intended to support student engagement, facilitate self-monitoring during study and enhance successful outcomes. The TEC Youth Guarantee-funded Youth Academy programmes are facilitated within a distinctly Pasifika-based teaching and learning model, Ka Wa'a.

¹ Source: NZQF System and Review, QAD, NZQA.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Scope – Focus Areas and rationale		
1.	Governance, management and strategy	Mandatory in all EERs
2.	Fresh-e Blended Learning environment	This is a cross-programme focus area, relating to a key strategy to offer blended learning options to students. Currently over 80 per cent of tertiary students at BEST select the Fresh-e delivery option on enrolment. This area also represents ongoing investment and an area of staff capability development.
3.	BEST People – Careers and Employment Service Centre	This is a cross-programme focus area seen as central to BEST's key proposition of ensuring 'valued outcomes for learners and other stakeholders'. The centre provides an important linkage between all programmes and the labour market, and represents significant ongoing investment and capability development. In addition, this linkage informs programme design, delivery and review. Most BEST learners will have contact with BEST People staff during or following their studies.
4.	Certificate in Business Administration (Level 4) (School of Business, Computing and Enterprise)	This SAC-funded programme has been offered since 2004 and has the largest student cohort (550 EFTS in 2014). It is delivered at both the Manukau and Waitakere sites.
5.	Diploma in Pacific Performing Arts (Level 5) (Pacific Institute of Performing	This SAC-funded programme is a two-year diploma at level 5, and is BEST's highest level of current delivery (50 EFTS in 2014). This

	Arts)	is an area proposed for degree development and is delivered at the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts campus in Avondale.
6.	Certificate in Business, Enterprise and Technology (Levels 2 and 3) (Youth Academy)	These programmes represent 30 per cent of the BEST Youth Academy, Youth Guarantee-funded student body (175 EFTS expected in 2014). The programme includes NCEA levels 1 and/or 2 as outcomes. Youth Guarantee-funded programmes are an increasing part of BEST's portfolio. Delivered at Manukau and Waitakere.

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.

Following an initial meeting with the director of strategic development (responsible for coordinating BEST's EER preparations), BEST provided a summary self-assessment, including proposed focus areas, the rationale for their selection, and specific educational performance information.

A scoping meeting then took place at the BEST Pacific Leadership Institute, Auckland. Present at that meeting were the directors, senior educational managers, and the lead evaluator. Following provision of additional information on performance across all programmes, the scope was modified and then confirmed. To assist with preparing the agenda, BEST also supplied additional information in the weeks leading up to the on-site phase of the EER.

Four evaluators conducted the on-site enquiry over four days (4-7 November 2014). They were joined by another NZQA staff member who observed the EER process for the purposes of professional development. Interviews were held with the directors, senior managers and numerous full-time staff drawn from each of the focus areas. Interviews (either in person or by phone) were also held with industry representatives with a knowledge of BEST's programmes, graduates, and family members invited by the provider. The evaluators also met with small groups of students from each of the focus area programmes.

As well as a summary of the organisation's self-assessment, and specific educational performance documentation cited above, BEST provided a wide range of supporting documentation to the evaluators on request during the on-site phase. These included: programme delivery schedules; graphical models of programme design; samples of review documents and students evaluations; programme review and business cycle calendars; strategic and component reviews of e-learning and information technology systems; minutes of management and programme-level meetings; and a range of other documents pertaining to programme or project monitoring and self-assessment more generally. These documents were used to substantiate information provided in interviews, and/or to provide the evaluators with more insight into the focus areas.

A demonstration of the Fresh-e blended learning website was made to the evaluation team, and three evaluators were able to attend a graduation performance relating to the Diploma in Pacific Performing Arts. Brief observation was also made of a BEST People 'industry stakeholder breakfast'.

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Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **BEST Pacific Institute of Education Limited**.

The reasons for high confidence in BEST can be summarised as follows:

- BEST demonstrates strong educational performance across programmes. A range of indicators include: a PTE-wide average 73 per cent course completion; average employment outcomes of 71 per cent, and further education outcomes of 13 per cent (84 per cent positive outcomes). These figures relate to the 2010-2013 period.
- This achievement is occurring within the context of a student cohort that has not been well served or otherwise successful in the formal educational system. Many students, according to data gathered by BEST, face acute social and economic challenges. Many achieve major educational and vocational gains arising from their study at BEST.
- For many Youth Academy students, their programme leads to a first qualification, re-engages them with formal education and offers a pathway into higher-level programmes. BEST's performance has been such that it has led to increased funding and directly contributes to the achievement of particular aspects of the Tertiary Education Strategy and Auckland Council's Auckland Plan.
- BEST's knowledge of programme-specific, employment and further education outcomes, including their economic value to the graduate, is detailed and reliable. This information flows from BEST's investment into timely career guidance and job placement activities, and their strong links with a wide range of employers.
- The programme portfolio is clearly and intentionally linked to a range of vocations in the service sector, providing transferable skills and leading to excellent employment and career outcomes for many graduates. BEST's investment into maintaining strong labour market links informs the programme areas.
- BEST offers a unique, self-developed model of delivery which includes blended delivery, and integrates pastoral care, excellent teaching and connection to employment. Guidance and support uses a coaching and mentoring approach, with learner support in class supplemented by external referral to specialist agencies as required.
- Management and oversight of staff is purposeful, informed by strategy and focused on achievement by learners. This delivers on the PTE's key values. Well-researched and thorough planning has identified the most important

strategies and changes for the future. Numerous aspects of these plans have been delivered on already to maintain or raise achievement – in particular reconfiguring teaching and guidance roles and new programme delivery models. At a broader level, the board of management and senior leadership are engaged with their stakeholders and their decisions are informed by a clear understanding of the social and economic conditions that have an impact on their students, in particular Pasifika living in Auckland.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **BEST Pacific Institute of Education Limited**.

BEST is in a process of change and renewal touching on many areas of management and staffing, and also aspects of programme and course delivery. Responses to growth have been both intentional and well resourced: restructuring and reorganising staff roles; identifying the main organisational resources and tools that need strengthening and/or modernising; recruiting a new tier of management expertise. These responses are relatively recent, and have arisen from well-resourced and thorough strategic review and planning processes.

In cases where programme or cohort educational achievement has been variable or poor, the PTE has sought to make informed decisions about how to respond based on the BEST available data and in line with the organisation's key goals rather than in a reactive manner. Agreed parameters such as 'Sala' (a composite representation of a typical student) and the BEST 'key propositions'² guide programme development and any changes to educational delivery. This is particularly evident in the evolution and development of Fresh-e since its introduction.

A range of useful formal tools are used to capture monitoring data: regular student surveys (albeit with some response rate weaknesses), student exit interviews, work placement monitoring, and staff programme-related activity reports. In a few important areas, the quality and validity of data and its use could readily be strengthened. Less formal means such as the talanoa³ and activities that bring Fresh-e students onto campus are also important monitoring mechanisms.

Capture and analysis of rich data across the PTE has recently been improved with targeted staffing (e.g. a specialist data analyst) and a clearer focus on monitoring. Some staff suggested that this needs to be supplemented with a better information

² The key propositions are: ensure vocational programmes align with workforce needs (with a level 4 qualification seen as a key economic benefit); provide an effective brokerage service between graduates and employers in job placement.

³ Talanoa ('talk' or 'discussion' in Fijian, Samoan and Tongan) is a specifically Pacific form of dialogue, used as a context for discussion, planning, catch-up, sharing and advising.

technology/student management system platform and better capture or reporting of data in some areas to support efficient and rigorous and timely review, as is planned.

Interaction and advocacy with others in the sector who share similar concerns for raising Pasifika educational outcomes strengthens the PTE's knowledge of how it can add value, for example by improving pathways to higher qualifications, and advocacy at government level. The evaluators noted some limitations in the evidence validating the effectiveness of external links – for example formal industry engagement around qualifications and comprehensive capture of less-formal industry feedback through the BEST People channel.

Nevertheless, investment in resources (physical, human resources, information technology and e-learning) is apparent and ongoing, and clearly aligns with the strategy and rationale of the PTE. New models of performance review, staff development and remuneration connect clearly to the changes in the programme design and delivery, as well as the increased scale of the PTE. As noted in this report, some aspects of this are very new and, accordingly, are yet to convincingly demonstrate that they have led to comprehensive improvements that are relevant and worthwhile.

Overall, NZQA can express high confidence in the PTE's capability in self-assessment.

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Findings⁴

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Most students who study at BEST are motivated to gain the skills and knowledge that will assist them to get better jobs, improve their family incomes and enjoy more secure, long-term employment. They achieve all of these goals in high numbers. Learner achievement is excellent.

Across all programmes, BEST uses an enhanced version of the outcomes monitoring model used in the former TEC-funded labour market programmes. Over the period 2010 to 2013, averaged positive labour market outcomes⁵ were 84 per cent: employment outcomes averaged 71 per cent and progression to further education or training averaged 13 per cent. These strong employment outcomes are closely monitored by the BEST People staff and only those jobs that are 'congruent' with the vocational area of study are counted as 'positive outcomes'.⁶ Sampling of this data, and how it is collected and used, confirmed to the evaluators that it is broadly reliable and certainly fit-for-purpose. Improvements in the personal incomes of graduates are also estimated within BEST's monitoring model (see Findings 1.2).

In the same 2010-2013 period, based on the two most applicable TEC performance indicators against which BEST monitors its performance, course completion averaged 73 per cent and qualification completion 61 per cent. BEST has introduced a number of measures to lift qualification completions. Noting that employment considerations are the most important factor for the students, and that students will leave study to take up full-time work, BEST has reshaped programme delivery to better support concurrent study and work. The Fresh-e blended learning environment is also being upgraded to better support flexible delivery (see Focus Area 2.2 for more specific detail on this focus area). The evaluators were provided with interim qualification completion data for 2014, which indicated that these strategies are apparently working as planned. Across programmes the results of

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 'Positive labour market outcomes' are here defined as: employment of 20+ hours per week, in work broadly congruent with the vocational area of training, and/or further education and training. These outcomes are measured two months after leaving the programme by direct contact with the employer and/or the student.

⁶ This later model of analysis was developed using information from Careers New Zealand.

external moderation of assessment by standard-setting bodies is very good, confirming that assessment decisions are being made at the national standard.

Youth Guarantee-funded programmes have been offered since 2010, when BEST transitioned from the former Youth Training stream. Approximately 25 per cent of BEST total student numbers are enrolled in Youth Guarantee programmes. Although performance has varied widely between cohorts, 2013 course completion was 71 per cent, qualification achievement 48 per cent, and positive labour market outcomes 73 per cent. Given that many of these students were 'not in employment education or training' (NEETS) when enrolled, and 80 per cent had attained less than 14 credits at school (and in many cases entered the programme alienated from formal education), these are very good results (see Focus Area 2.6 for more detail).

The primary benchmark used to gauge educational performance at BEST is the 'distance travelled' by each student. This is monitored and measured at the individual, programme cohort, and school level. Indicators used include: previous educational achievement; employment status; personal income; literacy and numeracy; and digital literacy. Information gathered by BEST shows significant improvements for many learners across the range of indicators.

The secondary benchmark used to measure performance at BEST are the TEC contracted performance targets. According to the TEC, BEST's course and qualification completion rates for all learner groups are below sub-sector medians from 2010 to 2013 (with the exception of Pasifika course completions in 2011 only). The PTE is implementing strategies to lift course and qualification achievement rates to meet their contractual targets. As noted, interim 2014 results for focus area programmes presented to the evaluators indicated an upward trend.

An important context to understanding BEST's achievement is the 'learner profile', which is clearly understood and closely monitored by BEST. Most of the students are Pasifika, with a notable 11 per cent increase in enrolment of Māori students since 2010. These new students have often not achieved well in the compulsory education sector and mainly reside in areas of south and west Auckland formally identified as having high levels of 'social deprivation'.⁷ The majority of students enrolled have no formal qualifications. BEST also enrolls large numbers of female students (for example, 74 per cent in the School of Business, Computing and Enterprise), and most of the students were previously unemployed, beneficiaries, or stay-at-home parents.

Also important, in line with the ethos of reducing barriers to participation and achievement, BEST operates an 'open-entry' policy, with a formal interview process (see Findings 1.5). BEST's Māori enrolments have increased from 25 per cent in 2010 to 36 per cent in 2014. Recognising that achievement (both course and qualification completion) by Māori students was lower than for other students,

⁷ <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/nzdep2013-index-deprivation>

significant review occurred and specific strategies, staff training and monitoring have been put in place. These strategies are carefully constructed, involve all staff, and fit well with other changes to programme delivery models discussed throughout this report. However, their effectiveness has yet to be evidenced based on BEST's data.

BEST has stated goals around providing formal qualifications – particularly at level 4 or above, which according to their analysis are achievable by the students, provide skills required by the labour market, and will significantly boost incomes and provide a career pathway. As described above, the PTE's knowledge of student achievement, and how it relates to 'distance travelled', is detailed, accurate and used to leverage improved performance.

Capture and analysis of rich data across the PTE has recently been improved with targeted staffing (e.g. a specialist data analyst) and a clearer focus on monitoring. Some staff suggested that this needs to be supplemented with a better information technology/student management system platform and better capture or reporting of data in some areas (e.g. milestone qualification achievements in the Youth Academy) to support efficient and timely review, as is planned. Best is currently designing an upgrade for its Student Information System, which is due for completion in 2015. BEST can do more to ensure that staff have access to reliable, timely and understandable performance data to support effective self-assessment to strengthen knowledge around the effectiveness of processes and practices in supporting learner achievement, and is working towards achieving this objective.

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 **Excellent**.

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

BEST's programme portfolio, student recruitment practices, guidance strategies, and labour market liaison all align to the organisation's key value proposition: 'a real job with career prospects lies at the end of [your] course of study'. Evidence gathered by BEST, and confirmed by graduate and stakeholder interviews and testimonials, indicates that BEST delivers very effectively on this proposition. BEST provides excellent value for graduates, their families and the many organisations and businesses that have employed graduates.

BEST's programme portfolio is informed by the linkage established between the career potential and earnings lift provided by achieving a qualification at level 4 or above. Equally, the 'opportunity cost' of a one-year programme is seen as providing a sound return on investment by each student and their fono/whānau. BEST gathers specific longitudinal outcomes data showing that graduates dramatically improve their personal income on gaining employment, and the PTE

has provided this information directly to government.⁸ The PTE also has extensive qualitative evidence of graduate outcomes, notably entry to careers – excluding casualised or part-time ('zero hours') positions where Pasifika in particular are currently over-represented. Although BEST benefits from its location close to centres of economic activity, the strong labour market outcomes described in Findings 1.1 have been achieved during a period of international and national economic downturn.

BEST student achievement also links directly and favourably to the Tertiary Education Strategy and the Auckland Council's Auckland Plan – both of which prioritise raising Pasifika, Māori, and youth participation and lifting success in education more generally. BEST is fully aware of both these strategies, which are reflected in the PTE's own strategic planning. This is particularly so for achievement of NCEA level 2, which is a key indicator in both strategies.⁹ During this evaluation a theme noted was the impact on families, as evidenced by family members recruiting other family members to study alongside them. For some families, these are the first formal qualifications achieved. A graduate has run educational workshops in her church to encourage others to pursue appropriate tertiary education. There are some financial incentives provided by BEST for the referral of new students. Nevertheless, the evaluation team noted that the value of higher education was often understood and expressed in quite pragmatic terms by students. They have often observed the benefit others gain after studying with the PTE. BEST has solid evidence of significant career progress for many graduates across their programme portfolio, and uses this effectively to inspire students.

Further examples of BEST's investment and efforts to understand and add value for wider stakeholders include engagement with community stakeholders through the LOGOS Pacific Institute of Christian Studies, the BEST Leadership Academy, and participation in Raise Pasifika (an independent volunteer organisation supporting greater education outcomes for the Pasifika population in Auckland), as well as participation in the NZQA Targeted Review of Qualifications and formation of the advisory group on e-learning guidelines.

⁸ [Inquiry into 21st Century Learning Environments and Digital Literacy \(2012\)](#)

⁹ <http://theplan.theaucklandplan.govt.nz/> Strategic Direction 1, Priority 2: 'Literacy, numeracy, educational achievement and skills determine people's ability to find work, and their income levels. In Auckland, over 40% of adults have low literacy and just over 50% have low numeracy skills. Improving adult education and skill levels will improve income levels and reduce socio-economic disadvantage. Assisting parents into education and employment is a route out of poverty for families. In addition, the parents' educational level is linked to children's participation in early childhood learning and achievement at school'.

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

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

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

BEST programmes clearly align with workforce needs and skills gaps, the needs of disengaged young learners and the socio-cultural aspirations of the stakeholders. Evidence for this alignment includes strong levels of educational achievement in vocational programmes, which regularly lead to employment and increased income for numerous graduates; re-engagement with formal education, and first-qualifications for an increasing number of younger learners; ongoing relationships with employers from appropriate referral of prospective employees with the skills and attributes they require; enduring relationships with the wider Pasifika community; and the development of programmes that are used and valued by the PTE's communities of interest.

Key activities and services within the PTE directly support these matched needs and their maintenance. The most important examples arising from this evaluation are summarised below:

- Fresh-e has had a strong uptake by students wishing to balance family commitments and part-time employment with their studies. Reportedly, over 80 per cent of tertiary students at BEST elect to study in a blended mode. The design of the teaching and learning model, which requires regular attendance by students as well as ongoing contact with online mentors, differentiates it from distance learning. Course requirements ensure that the 'learning community' aspects of BEST are not lost on these students. Their progress is also closely monitored, with early intervention implemented as required. Following thorough and documented internal and external review, a number of technical investments have already been made to strengthen this platform, and more are planned. These include 24/7 access by each student to their own materials and course materials; free 3G internet access from students' homes; and a laptop for each student.
- BEST People provides an in-house careers counselling and employment centre. Staff in this unit are involved with maintaining links with employers and brokering work trials and other forms of work placement, as well as employment. They provide BEST and students with direct and specific information on the local labour market, monitoring trends and identifying opportunities. Evidence from BEST's own evaluations as well as from interviews with graduates indicates that, in particular, they benefited from the interview coaching workshops and career planning and goal-setting components.
- The BEST Pasifika Leadership Academy has for the last four years provided a range of activities including a leadership programme in partnership with

the University of Auckland Business School. It provides a uniquely Pasifika approach to leadership development for a small cohort (10-15 students) annually, and as well as alumni who have enrolled from various industries. The evaluators particularly noted the role the leadership programme has played in developing those BEST staff who have been part of the academy and have progressed in their careers, becoming senior staff at BEST.

BEST has participated in the Targeted Review of Qualifications. The PTE is well versed in tertiary education policy and funding and quality assurance requirements, and actively engages in well informed advocacy at government level around Pasifika strategy and achievement. As noted, the PTE also engages appropriately in the quality assurance processes of various industry training organisations. The PTE adds value to the sector in relation to its educational delivery experience, and based on reflection on what is most effective.

Regular and systematic networking with the PTE's communities of interest informs, to varying degrees, BEST's planning and programming. Evidence of this included management group meeting minutes; records of stakeholder breakfast meetings; activities that engage the family members of students; BEST People staff activity reports; minutes from the Raise Pasifika educational forum meetings; and submissions to government. The employment outcomes and educational progress, and greatly improved personal development and confidence of many graduates, and their contribution back to their families and community, are very notable.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Based on the 'distance travelled' model of measuring learner achievement, and the course results and post-course outcomes being achieved, teaching at BEST is highly effective.

There is a consistently held belief among staff that every student enrolled on a suitable programme can succeed, and they work hard to make it happen. This begins with teaching staff gaining good information about each student from the initial interview, and the associated needs assessment process. Integration of strategies for embedding literacy and numeracy teaching practices appear effective, and some evidence of learner gain (based on national assessment tool data) is gathered. However, the full potential of the national assessment tool data is not yet being realised in the Certificate in Business Administration programme. Overall, learning environments and approaches to teaching are structured accordingly.

Although there are distinctive differences between programmes offered across BEST, a team-based approach that blends teaching and pastoral support is being

implemented around a specifically designed programme model. This provides a clearly structured focus for the teaching. The curriculum and course requirements are well understood by staff, and close attention to students' needs and prior academic performance informs the teaching. Management and overall control of processes for reviewing the curriculum all appear sound.

A feature of the teaching is the identification of numerous short-term milestones that provide achievable goals for students and an opportunity to celebrate success. In some component courses, students receive a text message indicating and celebrating successful completion of specific course components. Assessment is supporting learning and is used as a motivational marker point.

The vocational content of each programme, which in most cases is assessed under the competency-based model, is subject to regular review. Changes to programmes –including addition or removal of content – occur as a result. Sound use of guest speakers and field trips was noted within programmes to both motivate students and expose them to new experiences and new industries. In addition, the use of structured work placement (including some internships with public sector organisations) allows students to apply their skills in workplace contexts, and some graduates indicated that job roles they had not known about or considered became a reality for them as a result. The degree of formal documentation of these arrangements seems to vary, and requires reflection by staff to ensure expectations and linkages to the programme are clear to all parties.

Useful and relevant professional development is occurring. In particular, the ongoing enhancement of the Fresh-e platform is supported by in-house professional development for, and consultation with, teaching staff. The evaluators found the evidence less convincing around the consistency and effectiveness of teacher performance appraisal and observation of teaching, and with the recent changes to programme design and job descriptions it will be important that these and other aspects of the current review relating to aspects of Best's human resources are effective.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

BEST has effective entry processes, including reliable course information in brochure and web formats, enrolment guidelines for the 'enrolment consultants' who interview applicants, and a set of selection factors that guide and provide fairness to decisions. Capture and analysis of useful information, including enrolment trends, is shared appropriately within the PTE. Non-acceptance into programmes and the reasons why are documented and subject to analysis. Where there is no suitable programme for an applicant, staff described a range of referrals they may make to offer an alternative elsewhere. These processes strengthen

BEST's aspiration to reduce barriers to participation, while managing the requirement to achieved contracted outcomes.

BEST has over time developed a programme delivery framework designed to be distinctly Pasifika in concept, design and operation and based around the concept of a 'student learning journey'. The evaluation team found this model to be well considered and appropriate to the learner profile currently enrolling with BEST.

- In the Youth Academy, Ka Wa'a is purposefully resourced to provide a 'wrap-around' service to enable achievement. The framework enables (open entry with integrity), engages (teaching and support staff), enhances (BEST Life, pathways) and enriches (graduation and broader outcomes).
- The Niu Malaga and Whanau Fala approaches are being implemented in the School of Business certificate programmes for the first time in 2014, and monitoring of their effectiveness is occurring. These have strengthened the up-front, induction component of the certificate programmes. BEST has noted improved attendance rates and better early intervention to encourage students to move from blended to campus-based mode of study.
- The Pacific Institute of Performing Arts Sama School is run at the end of each year and provides prospective students the opportunity to audition for the performing arts school. The audition process includes discussions with the students about course expectations and challenges and provides staff with insights into what supports might be needed. It also provides the potential student with detailed information to guide their enrolment decisions. Current students and graduates advised that Sama School and the auditions were challenging, but confirmed their decision to enrol on the Diploma in Pacific Performing Arts programme. Pacific Institute of Performing Arts guest speakers are industry role models and include renowned Pasifika performers from New Zealand and Hawaii. Graduates often maintain an active relationship with the institute after leaving, including guest appearances and performance in graduation productions as detailed below (Focus Area 2.5).

As described in Focus Area 2.3, BEST People provide targeted follow-up and assistance to students who leave a programme before completing the qualification, or who take time to secure suitable employment. Monitoring of this follow-up is well documented, and the process for 'disengaging' with a former student is carefully considered and relatively formal. The PTE demonstrates a strong commitment to resourcing follow-up of students who for whatever reason have not completed their qualification.

Graduation ceremonies are considered by BEST as a significant indicator of the satisfaction and value of the programmes, as evidenced by fono/whānau participation and the specific reflections and comments made at these events.

Key mechanisms used to monitor guidance and support processes and their impact on achievement are attendance rates (which were noted as lower than the 80 per

cent target in the Certificate in Business Administration), comparisons of performance between full-time and campus and Fresh-e cohorts, and surveys, for which response rates were not particularly high (efforts are being made to get more detailed feedback from more students).

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

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

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

The purpose and direction of BEST is very clear. Staff are well informed about student achievement, strategy and goals and share a common purpose. Expectations are set high and are clearly documented, and success is celebrated. It is also evident that a transition from the founding director to a new chief executive is being strategically managed. A crucial additional leadership role of chief operations officer – which has been created but is as yet unfilled after the recent realignment of responsibilities – has been carefully designed with external expertise. This key role is in line with the PTE's philosophy and acknowledges stakeholder requirements.

Management and oversight of staff is purposeful. It is informed by strategy and focused on the achievements of learners, and delivers on the PTE's key values. Well-researched and thorough planning has identified the most important strategies and changes for the future. Numerous aspects of these plans have been delivered on already to maintain or raise achievement – in particular reconfiguring teaching and guidance roles and implementing new programme delivery models.

At a broader level, the board of management and senior leadership are engaged with their stakeholders and their decisions are informed by a clear understanding of the social and economic conditions that are having an impact on their students, in particular Pasifika living in Auckland.

The organisational clustering of programmes and activities (school, academy, institute, etc) is intentionally linked to particular student needs and student/stakeholder intended outcomes, rather than being based around student numbers or operational requirements. This is effective and allows for distinctiveness in delivery within the overall BEST mission and management structure. The unique design of roles within teams (for example, mobile facilitators and programme coaches) is based on reflection on experience in delivery, and on BEST's Pasifika education model and the PTE's goals and values. Staff report that they feel valued and are passionate about their work – student/graduate comment supported these views. As has been their past practice, BEST may consider it timely to conduct a formal staff survey given the size of the organisation and the changes they are undertaking, adding value to the overall self-assessment framework.

New senior management appointments have been made relatively recently, focusing on enhancing strategic planning, financial management systems, information technology capability and human resource management. Cross-organisational professional development is expected and supported and is relevant to roles and strategy. Plans to significantly strengthen the staff training framework in relation to, for example, the large number of reconfigured service delivery roles are in the early stages of implementation. The responses to growth and the strategic plan are positively reflected in all these activities. The impact of some major, planned change are, however, yet to be demonstrated.

Overall, BEST provides very good facilities for students and staff; the facilities may at times be challenged at the Manukau campus when Fresh-e students are also in attendance. Capital investment in facilities and procurement of new sites has occurred appropriately and in accordance with NZQA requirements.

Examples of community contribution include the establishment of the BEST Pasifika Leadership Academy and Charitable Foundation, which is headed by a prominent Pasifika sportswoman, and the Logos Pacific Institute of Christian Studies which provides a fees-free certificate programme and arose in response to the educational aspirations of the many Pasifika church communities with whom BEST engages.

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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 **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

A major proportion of the large-scale strategic initiatives and plans resulting from reviews are either in an early phase of implementation or are soon to be activated, based on timelines provided to the evaluators. This gives the evaluators some caution around ascribing high confidence in the effectiveness of these initiatives in regards to improved educational performance and/or improved outcomes for stakeholders. This is reflected in the overall statement of confidence for self-assessment as well as in this focus area.

Nevertheless, the strategic direction presented by BEST is clear, builds on past performance and success, and is supported by investment in recruitment of new staff, as well as promotion of leadership from within the PTE. Many of these changes were seen by the evaluators as both timely and necessary, both in terms of managing growth and for future sustainability. The evaluators found staff to be well informed of the PTE's direction and plans, but some aspects of the recent changes to programme design (e.g. Niu Malaga) and associated job descriptions and size of role are still being evaluated and embedded.

2.2 Focus area: Fresh-e Blended Learning environment

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

BEST was an 'early adopter' of online learning technologies, launching its first blended learning programme in 2001. A key milestone in the development of BEST's capability in this environment was collaboration with other tertiary education organisations in a TEC-funded project (2003-2006).¹⁰ One outcome was the launch of Fresh-e version 1.0 as the blended learning delivery system in 2007. After comprehensive review of the current system (including input by external consultants and tertiary education peers) BEST is in the process of updating to

¹⁰ Best collaborated with Wintec, Weltec and Northland Polytechnic in a project to develop and implement a unique New Zealand courseware tailored (particularly to) Māori and Pasifika people. Source: Evaluation of the E-Learning Collaborative Development Fund (2007) CORE Education Ltd.

Fresh-e version 3.0. Some improvements to usability and guidance have been achieved as a result of the review, but based on detailed plans, the new version will clearly enhance the platform as an educational medium if implemented successfully.

Although the evaluators were cautious in their assessment around the extent to which the current platform demonstrates exemplary educational performance relating to outcomes, this focus area was rated as clearly effective in terms of processes and intended outcomes. Fresh-e allows learners to self-direct proportions of their study, while having regular on-campus engagement with teaching and support staff. This matches learner needs and/or preferences, with 80 per cent of tertiary school students selecting this mode. Educational achievement by these learners is good, although more could be done to develop timely and accessible monitoring reports around Fresh-e learner engagement, satisfaction and achievement. Some aspects of learner guidance around assessment and learning hours, and validation of learner assessment, also require further consideration and strengthening by teaching staff.

The investment in this innovation, recruitment of specialist staff, and developing processes for guiding teachers in online resource creation are useful and worthwhile. Fresh-e 3.0, coupled with the other major information technology projects and staff professional development now underway, will almost certainly strengthen the usability and effectiveness of this learning mode. The extent to which this self-assessment and change leads to equivalent rates of achievement by off-campus students has yet to be demonstrated.

2.3 Focus area: BEST People Careers and Employment Service Centre (BEST People)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

It was very clear in this evaluation that this significantly staffed and resourced service (25 per cent of tertiary school staff) is aligned with and supports both achievement and the key value propositions of BEST: getting students and graduates into employment and making progress towards a viable career (see Findings 1.1 and 1.2 for more detail).

BEST People staff have relevant tertiary qualifications and diverse experience and labour market networks which they use to support learner achievement. They add value beyond a liaison or brokering role by also delivering clearly focused employment-related workshops, which students value. Students and graduates warmly described BEST People as 'enablers', 'followers-up', 'encouragers', and 'motivators'. Notably, if required, BEST People provides targeted follow-up and assistance to students who leave a programme before completing the qualification, or who take time to secure suitable employment. This service provision is beyond contractual or funder expectations. Monitoring of follow-up is well documented, and

the process for 'disengaging' with a former student is carefully considered and relatively formal. This reflects the BEST ethos of producing 'work ready...self-managing' graduates but '[avoiding] creating dependency'.

While there are some new arrangements, such as interrelated roles between teaching staff and BEST People staff, and these are still being monitored and fully embedded, the evaluators observed that the service allows teachers to focus on course content while work experience or post-programme outcomes are being taken care of by other staff. BEST People also add value by gathering information on job requirements, labour market trends and employer needs, but evidence was not strong that this reconnaissance is being either completely captured or fully used. In addition, the evaluators noted some variation in formality regarding structuring students' workplace arrangements, which carries some risks and should be addressed.

2.4 Focus area: Certificate in Business Administration (Level 4)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

The current version of this SAC-funded programme has been offered since 2004 and has the largest student cohort (550 EFTS in 2014) of any BEST programme. It is delivered at both the Manukau and Waitakere sites. In the 2010-2013 period the average course completion of 71 per cent, and qualification completion of 59 per cent, were lower than the BEST average. Completion rates for those electing to pursue the blended delivery option are slightly lower. These rates are also slightly lower than the ITP and PTE median for those providers against which BEST makes general comparisons. However, positive labour market outcomes (see Findings 1.1 for definition) generally exceed BEST averages and were 89 per cent in 2013.

The programme content is relevant and has high transferability to a range of industries and job roles. Graduates interviewed had found employment with a number of large public sector entities and private enterprises in operational, human resources, marketing and public relations roles. Of the steadily increasing proportion of graduates progressing to further study (24 per cent in 2013) many choose diploma-level courses. Planning and oversight of delivery is very sound. The results of national external moderation of assessment are excellent.

BEST has detailed and reliable information gathered during needs assessment and programme delivery and afterwards by the BEST People staff, which they use to monitor and review this and other programmes in the tertiary school. Changes have been made to the programme model in this school with a view to lifting qualification completion rates and, as indicated in Table 1, these appear to be working as planned.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Course completion	70%	80%	66%	68%	Not supplied
Qualification completion	66%	69%	49%	51%	68% (one cohort)
Positive labour market outcomes	Not supplied	80%	84%	89%	Not yet available

*Based on confirmed TEC Single Data Return (apart from the 2014 'in-progress' results), and BEST People monitoring.

2.5 Focus area: Diploma in Pacific Performing Arts (Level 5)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

This diploma entails two years of full-time study. Results for 2011-2013 show that at least 73 per cent of students who enrol in the diploma complete all courses within the programme and gain the qualification. These results are comparable with those of performing arts programmes at levels 5-7 for PTEs and for Māori/Pasifika students, as reported on the Education Counts website maintained by the Ministry of Education. Employment and further education outcomes over this period have been reasonably positive, and in 2013 all graduates achieved a positive outcome (56 per cent employed, and 46 per cent progressing to further education) according to Pacific Institute of Performing Arts own data. Year 2 performance is particularly strong, and overall performance is strengthening further (see Table 2).

According to the programme leaders, those students who leave the programme after the first year are usually facing financial pressure to find employment, or decide to pursue studies in another field. This is supported by comments made by students and graduates across the focus areas.

2011/2012	Enrolled	Retained (target 80%)		Qualification achievement	
Year 1	30	23	77%	23	77%
Year 2	25	22	88%	22	88%
2012/2013	Enrolled	Retained (target 80%)		Qualification achievement	
Year 1	22	19	86%	19	86%
Year 2	16	16	100%	16	100%
2013/2014*	Enrolled	Retained (target 80%)		Qualification achievement	
Year 1	31	31	100%	30	97%
Year 2	25	25	100%	25	100%
*Based on BEST's student management system and retention calculation (2014 results are 'in progress')					

An articulation arrangement is in place which allows Pacific Institute of Performing Arts graduates to pathway into the final year of the Unitec Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts. In 2013, two graduates achieved the degree through this agreement, and an additional two graduates have achieved the Manukau Institute of Technology Bachelor of Creative Arts (Performing Arts).

Notably, many graduates have been part of major productions, both within New Zealand and internationally. Graduates also regularly return to offer peer support, share experiences with current students and assist in the management of graduation productions, further strengthening the 'collective' strength and goals of the institute. BEST reciprocates with graduate access to facilities. These outcomes are in line with the Tertiary Education Strategy aspirations that, '[tertiary education] in the creative industries plays a vital role in democracy by enriching New Zealand's culture and providing freedom of thought and expression'. Pacific Institute of Performing Arts graduates are working successfully in theatre, television, dance and other, similar fields.

In 2013, Pacific Institute of Performing Arts moved into a more spacious, renovated site in Avondale town centre; graduates and second-year students described this as 'a great improvement'. A persistent theme noted by the evaluators was the 'Pasifika family environment', the opportunity for students to learn about Pacific studies, genealogy and history through the creative arts medium. Students reflect on and share their Pasifika identities, and can express their own unique identities through performance in small and supportive classes. Pacific Institute of Performing Arts tutors and other staff provide a 'safe' environment for an often emotionally and physically demanding programme. Students also gain an important insight into all facets of performance art when they produce a solo performance as an integrated final assessment in year 2.

Self-assessment processes – including talanoa sessions, student surveys and programme review processes – are meaningful and are used to monitor and improve delivery. The programme leader and tutors are responsive to student feedback. Although a range of very positive testimonials from industry leaders were provided, stakeholder contacts were not provided in a timely fashion to directly triangulate academic, community and industry support and feedback into the programme. The evaluators noted the recent intention to develop a formal programme advisory group.

The Pacific Performance core component is a point of difference for this diploma and is assessed against performance criteria developed by Pacific Institute of Performing Arts. The institute would benefit from the implementation of a more formal external moderation process for this component. This would better evidence the academic rigour of this component and could be a strong contribution to overall self-assessment of the programme.

2.6 Focus area: Certificate in Business Enterprise and Technology (Levels 2 and 3)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

Below is a summary of student results for 2013.

Certificate in Business Enterprise and Technology (Level 2):

- Fifty of 117 students (43 per cent) achieved all of the embedded qualifications available on the programme: National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing (Level 2); National Certificate in Employment Skills (Level 1) and NCEA levels 1 and 2. Overall, calculated on an EFTS basis, the programme achieved a 64 per cent qualification completion rate. The TEC target was 40 per cent of students achieving NCEA level 2.

Certificate in Business Enterprise and Technology (Level 3):

- Thirty-two of 65 students (49 per cent) achieved all of the embedded qualifications available on the programme: National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing (Level 3); National Certificate in Computing (Level 3); National Certificate in First Line Management (Level 3); and NCEA level 3. Overall, calculated on an EFTS basis, the programme achieved a 75 per cent qualification completion rate. The TEC target was 60 per cent of students achieving NCEA level 3.
- The forecast achievement for 2014 indicates that NCEA level 2 completion is tracking at 53 per cent, and NCEA level 3 at 62 per cent (the TEC targets are the same as for 2013).

On request, BEST provided additional data capturing the achievement of other students who did not achieve all the embedded qualifications available but achieved credits towards those qualifications. Overall, these confirmed excellent achievement for students of 80 per cent of those who entered the programme with no previous qualifications from school. As such, the programme has direct links to national-level strategies for young Pasifika and Māori as well as helping address the NEETS phenomenon.¹¹

The programme delivery includes self-paced, but closely guided learning – allowing students to progress at their own pace. Staff are currently reviewing the delivery of the embedded qualifications to ensure their self-assessment captures the full picture of achievement, and that there are milestones within the academic year to track student progress, better enabling qualification completion.

A particular achievement is re-engagement of students who enrol with a number of challenges (family commitments, peer pressure, living conditions, financial and medical issues). Staff and current students note a huge rise in personal confidence and self-esteem, counteracting previous less-than-satisfactory educational experiences. In addition, there are beneficial and improved life skills, study skills, values and general attitudes. Personal development is tracked through observations by staff, monitoring attendance, attitude, teamwork and participation.

Literacy/numeracy capability is assessed using the national assessment tool near enrolment and near the conclusion of the programme. Most students show a marked gain in their capability. Whānau and graduates interviewed by the evaluators described how educational re-engagement affects the students' interactions at home and in the community. For some families, this is the first formal qualification achieved, and graduates act as role models to siblings and extended families; employment enables graduates to contribute further to their families. A quote from a student captures what others expressed to the evaluators, and through BEST student surveys: 'there is no elevator to success, you have to take the stairs one step at a time ... that is what I am doing'.

¹¹ In 2013 Pacific youth 'not in employment education or training' (NEETS) in Auckland was reportedly 23 per cent, as compared with 14 per cent in the wider population. This represents approximately 9,000 Pacific urban youth, mainly in West and South Auckland (source: Best Pacific).

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

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Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Taupo Language and Outdoor
Education Centre trading as
Taupo Language

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 27 October 2010

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MoE Number: 8954
NZQA Reference: C02365
Dates of EER visit: 30-31 August 2010

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

Location:	Taupo
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1993
Number of students:	Domestic: Nil International: 23
Number of staff:	Three full-time Six to eight part-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	Two NZQA-approved courses that effectively operate as one: - General English - English and Optional Outdoors
Sites:	One only as above
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Taupo Language offers one course currently in Taupo, which provides access to a variety of outdoor activities. These activities are seen as an attraction to studying at Taupo Language, but are not linked to the academic programme.</p> <p>General English is offered in a variety of options, such as full-time and part-time, and varying lengths to suit the students.</p> <p>Taupo Language is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, and is approved to offers places for international students from 11 years of age and</p>

over.

Recent significant changes: Taupo Language has recently completed building extensions which added two new classrooms a computer suite, and extended two classrooms, as well as extending the reception and administration area. A new, purpose-built database is currently being trialled.

Previous quality assurance history: The most recent quality assurance visit by NZQA was a quality audit in 2007, and Taupo Language met all of the requirements for ongoing registration in place at that time.

Other: Taupo Language was audited by English New Zealand this year and all requirements were met.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This external evaluation and review included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support including international students.

The following programme was included, as this is the only programme currently being offered:

- General English.

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 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/>

This external evaluation and review involved two NZQA lead evaluators and was conducted over two days on site in Taupo. The evaluation team interviewed management, teaching staff, and a sample of students, and reviewed a sample of the organisation's documentation to confirm and validate the evidence discussed with the personnel above.

Taupo Language will have an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received will be fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

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Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre**.

Taupo Language enrolls students from a wide range of countries, including Saudi Arabia, China, Thailand, and French Polynesia, with approximately one-third of the students either returning to Taupo Language or choosing the school based on word-of-mouth recommendations from family members and other students who have experienced success. This indicates that Taupo Language is a well-respected institution within its graduate community.

Students set their own education goals with the help of their teachers, and in the main achieve these goals. Taupo Language monitors students' achievements individually, and records sighted at this evaluation indicate that students are making progress and moving to successively higher English language classes as expected and gaining confidence in using English. Students and staff interviewed at this evaluation confirmed satisfaction with the rate of students' academic progress. However, aside from noting students' IELTS (International English Language Testing System) results, Taupo Language is not currently benchmarking its students' academic achievements against any internal or external measures, which would establish objective measures against which to evaluate how well students are achieving.

Students enrol with Taupo Language for a variety of reasons, such as to improve their capabilities with the English language for travel, to improve their employment opportunities in their home country, or to gain entry to higher-level courses. A small number enrol to prepare for sitting IELTS examinations, and results show that these students achieve their goals, with average IELTS scores between 5.5 and 7.0 commonly being achieved.

Taupo Language is using two English-language level descriptor rating systems; one during the course of study, and a separate rating system for students' graduating certificates. While these rating systems are independently valid, there is potential for them to cause some confusion for students with a limited understanding of English.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre**.

Taupo Language reviews its performance using a mix of informal and formal processes that are appropriate for the size of the organisation. Overall, the focus of these review processes has been on compliance rather than being evaluative in

nature. Although Taupo Language is developing an annual plan to review all aspects of the business, this has not yet progressed to a detailed stage to show how these reviews will be conducted evaluatively. While Taupo Language's quality assurance focus has been on compliance, such as with the English New Zealand quality standard, the organisation is developing processes to evaluate how well it is performing as an educational organisation overall.

Taupo language has developed processes to review how well students needs are being met and how well they are progressing and achieving. For example, staff monthly meetings to discuss and review school processes and students' progress, the recent commissioning of a purpose-built database and student management system to monitor student achievements, and other organisational performance information. Because of the small number of staff and students, Taupo Language is also able to maintain open, informal, and ongoing communications across the organisation, and the evaluation team observed an open, supportive, and collaborative organisational culture. Staff and students interviewed commented that they felt the organisation had a warm and welcoming family feeling about it and that it was very easy to discuss issues or concerns as they arose.

Taupo Language has a well-developed quality management system which includes policies and procedures for reviewing organisational goals and objectives. The organisation has not yet developed written procedures for evaluative quality assurance as required for ongoing registration; the development of these procedures would provide Taupo Language staff with a consistent process.

The evaluation team is confident that the changes currently being developed and implemented are likely to lead to Taupo Language developing its capability in evaluative quality assurance. While these plans were at an early stage during this evaluation, further details have been submitted subsequent to the onsite visit. The evaluation team is confident that the developing processes are likely to be effective in increasing the organisation's ability to track, monitor, and improve performance.

TEO response

Taupo Language has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Findings¹

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 **Adequate**.

Taupo Language students undertake a placement test on arrival in Taupo to determine the appropriate English-language class level. Staff and students interviewed confirmed that this test works well for them, with very few students moving up or down a level in the first few weeks.

Students' progress is monitored by weekly tests, and individual students' results are entered in a database. The database was sighted at this evaluation and it provides adequately for monitoring individual students' achievements and progress. A new database and student management system has recently been set up and is still being adapted to best meet the organisation's needs. This new tool will have the capacity to allow Taupo Language staff to produce reports that will help them monitor and evaluate students' progress in more detail, such as comparing current students' performance with past student cohorts.

Students and staff interviewed expressed satisfaction with the rates of achievement, and students' files sighted confirmed that students make steady progress through successive class levels. However, Taupo Language does not yet benchmark its students' rates of progress internally or externally to verify how well they achieve.

Students have access to a set of English-language level descriptors to rate their own progress when considering moving up a class, and when they complete their studies students are given a leaving certificate with the English class level achieved, which includes a table of level descriptors. However, these descriptors are different from the first set noted above. The evaluation team considers that this may be potentially confusing for students and recommends using one set only.

Taupo Language's self-assessment in this area has a higher focus on having the right records than on the analysis of the records and the subsequent interpretation to determine how well learners are achieving.

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**.

Taupo Language has been in business as an English language school for 20 years, and approximately one-third of its students are either returning for a second time or enrolling from referrals from family or friends, indicating that past and current students value the skills and knowledge gained at this institution. Students interviewed at this evaluation commented that they value their improved abilities in the English language for personal reasons such as helping them to travel, for economic reasons such as improved employment opportunities in their home country, and for achieving IELTS scores specifically for improved access to higher academic courses. Taupo Language tracks the destinations of its IELTS student, and a significant number have been able to use their IELTS achievements to gain entry to higher study in New Zealand or in their home country.

Taupo Language's position in the town of Taupo is also valued by students, because they are in effect in a total immersion environment where they have to use English and practise their skills, and they have access to the variety of outdoor activities offered in the Taupo region.

Students and staff were interviewed at this evaluation and both groups indicated that they were well satisfied with the delivery of the programme and its outcomes. Informal and unsolicited feedback is received through the use of an internet Facebook page and through the recruitment agents. Students are surveyed regularly to determine their level of satisfaction with the programme. While the results of this survey process indicate high student satisfaction, the survey tool itself has been constructed poorly and was likely to provide invalid data because of this. Subsequent to the onsite visit this survey has been re-developed and improved. The organisation's self-assessment capability in this area is likely to improve with improvements to the student survey.

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

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

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

Taupo Language has developed its own placement test, which all students take on arrival. This is used to determine the most appropriate English-language class level for each student to enter initially. For all but a few students this test works well, with very few students being shifted from their initial class in the early weeks.

Students spoken to at this evaluation confirmed that the placement test was valuable and accurate and that they had been placed into appropriate classes.

One of the main reasons international students travel to New Zealand to study English language, and to Taupo Language in particular, is to meet other students from different countries. To that extent, Taupo Language meets this need well by limiting enrolments from any one nationality group and accommodating students' requests to be placed in classes with nationalities other than their own.

Taupo has arrangements with a number of people in the community who act as "counsellors" for international students. These counsellors are available when students first arrive and at any other time when a student needs the support of someone who speaks their first language.

Students' accommodation needs are very well met, with all homestay accommodation being police-checked. Staff regularly communicate with homestay parents, with students to check they are comfortable and happy with their accommodation, and with the parents or agents of students aged under 18 years. This process has ensured that students' needs are very well matched and any emerging issues are well managed.

As in other areas reviewed in this evaluation, Taupo Language currently focuses more on ensuring the organisation is compliant with legislation and other standards it is required to meet, rather than reviewing how well the needs of students and other stakeholders are matched. The evaluation team observed that this process has resulted in needs being well matched. However, the risk for Taupo Language in focusing only on compliance is that students' and other stakeholders' needs may change rapidly, and without a well-developed and purposeful evaluative approach to quality assurance the organisation may not know how well needs are being matched.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Taupo Language uses a range of internationally recognised English language course texts, and supplements these with a variety of current events stories, DVDs, internet articles, and related resources to support and vary the standard texts. This approach is successful in maintaining teacher and student interest and provides a stimulating and constantly varied learning environment. A recent building programme has added two classrooms and extended two others, significantly improving and enhancing the learning environment.

The organisation has a sufficient number of well-qualified and experienced teachers of English to speakers of other languages to maintain small class sizes of approximately ten students each. Students and staff interviewed commented on

the high quality of teaching and the high degree of mutual respect experienced at Taupo Language. The organisation maintains a large pool of appropriately qualified and experienced relief teachers who are available to be called on as needed.

Taupo Language reviews staff performance at least two times a year through teaching observations by the director of studies and a peer, and by reviewing students' achievements. This process is working very well, and the director of studies is exploring further options to improve the evaluative nature of this appraisal process, such as staff carrying out self-reviews. Staff are actively involved in professional development within Taupo Language and also travel to other centres for seminars as time and money allows.

Student attendance is very closely monitored, with staff tracking arrival times and following up on absences consistently. The result of this, and the welcoming learning environment created by staff, is that students' attendance is very close to 99 per cent, which is quite rare and is a significant achievement. Taupo Language considers this to be a key factor in helping students to achieve their goals.

Taupo Language has well-established self-assessment processes for monitoring the effectiveness of teachers through its performance reviews and how well its students are learning. Students' progress is recorded with weekly tests, and parents of international students aged under 18 years receive monthly updates via the recruitment agents. However, as already noted, Taupo Language has begun to introduce aspects of the Common European Framework, partly for the purpose of establishing a benchmark against which to judge how well students are achieving.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

Students at Taupo Language are very well supported in their studies. On arrival, students receive a handbook which includes relevant information about New Zealand and the Taupo district, and local contact phone numbers in case of emergencies. A student card is provided with key information and any-time contact phone numbers in English and the student's first language. The organisation provides students with personal support in the first few days by counsellors fluent in the students' first language to familiarise new students with the local area.

The evaluation team observed a respectful relationship between staff and students and a high level of awareness by staff of specific cultural and religious needs.

Two times a year Taupo Language reviews how well it meets the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. Appropriate processes for students to share concerns in a confidential manner are maintained in

either written or oral format. Issues that are identified are dealt with in a sensitive and appropriate manner. All homestays are police-checked every three years and a dedicated support person visits homestays periodically to ensure the security and safety of the students.

Regular and appropriate communications are maintained with students' parents. For example, monthly updates are sent to parents via the agents of under 18-year-old students. These updates include academic progress, notes regarding homestay arrangements, and any other relevant information.

When serious discipline issues occur, which is very rare, they are dealt with quickly and fairly and a very good level of documentation is maintained of all steps taken to resolve the matter. Average attendance rates are approximately 99 per cent, which is exemplary. Taupo Language attributes this to maintaining a very tight watch on not only attendance but also the time of arrival to class. Attendance is a key contributing factor to student achievement, and this is seen clearly at Taupo Language.

The evaluation team observed an open organisational culture where all matters are discussed regularly and improvements made as they are required, such as monitoring attendance or following up on students who are not actively engaging in classes. In this area the organisation has well-developed evaluative self-assessment processes to track and monitor students' needs and to implement improvements on an ongoing basis.

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

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

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

Taupo Language has been in operation for 20 years, owned and operated by the same owner from the time of its founding. It was evident at this evaluation that the owner cares passionately for the success of Taupo Language and has accumulated considerable experience in operating a language school, managing for change, and focusing on the interests of students. The school has a very dedicated staff, who are well qualified and experienced for teaching English Language. Taupo Language also has a large pool of experienced and qualified relief teachers, who are available when needed, providing appropriate quality of tuition and continuity for students.

This is a very well-resourced language school, with a wide range of suitable internationally recognised texts and considerable supplementary teaching material to maintain the fresh interest of students and staff. A recent building programme has been completed, resulting in two new classrooms, including a computer suite, two enlarged classrooms, and an enlarged office and reception space.

Taupo Language is providing international students with excellent learning environments and resources. Both students and staff interviewed at this evaluation commented very positively on the resources and classrooms. Staff noted that when new resources are requested they are generally purchased quickly.

Taupo Language has a director of studies to oversee the English language programme, and is currently developing an overall syllabus. Some minor areas are incomplete, such as the English-language level descriptors. Two slightly different sets of rating descriptors are currently used, one for students to check their progress against when requesting to be shifted up a level, and one on the reverse of the graduating certificate. This has the potential to confuse students who have English as a second language.

Taupo Language collects and reviews some performance information, but is in the process of developing an annual planning cycle to build an evaluative approach to quality assurance. However, as an organisation, the focus is still more on compliance than evaluating how well it is performing as an educational organisation overall.

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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 **Good**.

2.2 Focus area: Student support including international students

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

2.3 Focus area: General English

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

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Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those implied or expressed within the report.

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

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Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

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).

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eeer/introduction/>

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NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Taupo Language and Outdoor
Education Centre trading as
Taupo Language

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 7 May 2014

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MoE Number: 8954

NZQA Reference: C13820

Dates of EER visit: 21 and 22 January 2014

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:	Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre trading as Taupo Language
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	111 Tuwharetoa Street, Taupo
Delivery sites:	One site – as above
First registered:	11 February 1993
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General English courses at six different levels with varying combinations of outdoor activities at the learners' choice• Preparation courses for IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and Cambridge FCE (First Certificate in English) examinations• Pre-secondary school course
Code of Practice signatory?	Yes for learners 14 years of age and above; Taupo Language also holds approval to host study groups for international learners 11-13 years of age.
Number of students:	Approximately 200 learners in total per annum (37 enrolled at the time of the on-site visit)
Number of staff:	Management: three Contracted English teachers: eight Contracted (on-call) student counsellors: six
Scope of active accreditation:	As per courses currently delivered

- Distinctive characteristics:
- Learners come from over 20 different countries. Significant representation includes: Saudi Arabian, New Caledonian and Japanese (20 per cent each), and Tahitian (10 per cent).
 - 66 per cent male learners; 34 per cent female
 - Learners are usually attracted by the small town atmosphere of Taupo, the English language-only environment around town, and its proximity to a variety of outdoor adventure activities.
 - Learners predominantly enrolled for short-term courses (defined as less than 12 weeks). The average duration of short-term enrolments, which accounted for about 80-90 per cent of learners, is around three weeks.
 - Approximately 10-20 per cent of learners enrol as long-term (enrolled for 12 weeks or more). Long-term learners generally studied for 21 weeks on average.
 - At the time of the on-site visit, 75 per cent of learners were under the age of 18. The average age of learners is usually about 20 years.
 - Taupo Language is a member of English New Zealand.¹

Recent significant changes: -

Previous quality assurance history: The previous external evaluation and review (EER) of Taupo Language was conducted in 2010. NZQA was Confident in both the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of the language school.

Other: Taupo Language receives no external funding support from government agencies, other than through the Tertiary Education Commission for

¹ English New Zealand is an association of English language providers, with quality assurance responsibilities for its members. Membership is voluntary but also restricted. For more information see www.englishnewzealand.co.nz. Some special arrangements apply for the quality assurance of English language schools as agreed between NZQA and English New Zealand. For more details, see <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/english-language-schools-quality-assurance/>.

delivering the English for Migrants programme.²

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of this EER included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management and strategy
- International students

The other focus area selected was:

- General English

All learners at Taupo Language are enrolled in the General English programme, although many of the learners supplement and/or substitute a portion of their studies with various outdoor activities.

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.

Taupo Language requested this EER, originally scheduled for the latter half of 2014, to be brought forward to January 2014.

Self-assessment materials were delivered to NZQA in a timely fashion to inform the scoping of this EER, including the 2013 audit from English New Zealand.

Prior to the scope of the evaluation being finalised, the lead evaluator met with the owner/director and director of studies in person to agree on the focus areas and logistics of the on-site visit.

The evaluation team comprised three evaluators, including an associate evaluator with expertise in the delivery of English language programmes to speakers of other languages. The on-site visit was conducted over one and a half-days. Interviews were held with the owner/director, the director of studies, the manager, five English teachers and nine learners. One of the six student counsellors and a homestay host were visiting the school and the evaluation team interviewed them as well. A range of documents was sampled and reviewed.

² In 2013, Taupo Language enrolled one learner under this programme.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre**.

- Learners' self-evaluation at exit interviews, together with the use of the 'can-do' statements from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a self-evaluative tool in the classroom, overwhelmingly confirmed systematic improvements in the learners' knowledge and use of the English language (see Findings 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3).
- Throughout their course of studies, learners enhanced their cognitive abilities such as self-confidence and, in the case of younger learners, independence (see Findings 1.2).
- All English teachers are experienced and appropriately qualified in teaching English as a foreign language. The small class size and family-like environment foster a positive learning relationship between the learners and the teachers (see Findings 1.4).
- The language school goes beyond the call of duty and provides excellent pastoral care to all its international learners, well exceeding the minimum requirements under the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (see Findings 1.5).
- The small management team, responsible for governance and management functions, is effective and efficient. The owner/director demonstrated resilience over an extended period of challenges as a result of volatile external factors, and successfully led the language school through these ongoing challenges by adjusting its offerings and operations accordingly (see Findings 1.6).
- There is very strong evidence of the value of outcomes to major stakeholders such as the local community, local schools, outdoor activities providers within the region, and the New Zealand government; through marketing of the Taupo region overseas and the contribution towards promoting international education and tourism; and through learners' involvement in community voluntary work (see Findings 1.2).
- While recent outcomes for the IELTS preparation course are inconclusive for statistical reasons (see Findings 1.1), and upgrades to some classroom technology may be desirable (see Findings 1.4), these issues do not overshadow the highly positive overall performance of the language school.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre**.

- The evaluation team found many effective processes and mechanisms in operation at Taupo Language for collecting, analysing and understanding the needs of its stakeholders. This is confirmed and commended in the 2013 English New Zealand audit of the language school (see Findings 1.3).
- Management and teacher meetings are regular and purposeful. Minutes are taken and action plans generated with a focus on continuously improving operations and performance (see Findings 1.4 and 1.6).
- Taupo Language operates highly effective review processes to ensure its ongoing compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, and has sound systems to ensure the well-being, health and safety of all its learners (see Findings 1.5 and 1.6).
- Taupo Language operates an information system that contains a lot of useful data. The school uses the system effectively to understand its market as well as the individual learner's progress and achievements. There is room to improve the use of data for measuring and monitoring teaching effectiveness and overall outcomes at an organisational level (see Findings 1.1 and 1.6).
- There is room for improvement in internal and external benchmarking, especially for long-term learners and around the overall educational performance across the school (see Findings 1.1).
- An oversight that resulted in non-compliance with one of the English New Zealand's prescribed standards, although remedied immediately, was slightly disappointing considering that Taupo Language has high regard for its membership status with English New Zealand (see Findings 1.6).

Findings³

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 **Good**.

Taupo Language considers itself successful in educational achievement when learners are satisfied with their experience and report that they have gained some improvements in English at course completion. Taking into account that the majority of learners (around 80 per cent but increasing to 88 per cent in 2013) enrolls only for the short-term (with an average duration of three weeks), this is considered to be an appropriate measure. Learner self-evaluation at the exit interview confirmed that all learners felt they improved their English during their course of study.

All learners achieve at Taupo Language in terms of completing the course they have enrolled in and gaining some improvement in English. The evaluation team was told that no learners ever dropped out – even when unfavourable family circumstances struck, the learner always returned at some stage to complete their remaining studies with the school. Hence, the course completion rate for the majority of the students (i.e. those enrolled for a period of three weeks) is 100 per cent.

However, for the long-term learners with a specific objective of achieving a certain level of IELTS score for further academic pursuit, the evidence of achievement is less conclusive. Some learners in 2013 did not appear to have achieved the level desired and required re-taking of the IELTS examination. Nine out of 163 learners and 22 out of 217 learners attempted the IELTS examination in 2013 and 2012 respectively.

It is evident that Taupo Language emphasises the progress and achievement of the individual learner. Taupo Language uses the can-do statements from CEFR as a self-evaluative tool in the classroom and to collect data to form the learners' six-weekly reports. Each learner is given regular quizzes and assessments to gauge their progress, with feedback and reports given afterwards by way of one-to-one discussions with the English teacher. This process is learner-focused and ensures individual needs are well catered for. The use of CEFR confirms there are systematic improvements in the learners' knowledge and use of the English language.

Taupo Language compared the 'journey travelled' of its learners with two other English New Zealand members, but decided to disregard the comparisons because of significant differences in learners' characteristics. Nevertheless, while the

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

combination of English and activities may be different to the programmes offered at some other private training establishments, the evaluation team understands this is not unique and there are other English New Zealand-affiliated language schools that offer similar combinations of learning and activities. There remains potential to identify a way to compare educational performance, even taking into account the special characteristics of this language school. Overall, Taupo Language was unable to convince the evaluation team that there are sufficient processes in place to ascertain overall organisational performance in education, beyond course completion rates and individual learner progress, as mentioned.

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 **Excellent**.

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

Taupo Language produces outcomes valuable to its learners. The language school provides an environment for learners to experience New Zealand and other cultures as well as have an enjoyable and, in many cases, exciting time in Taupo. Learners gain varying levels of improvement in their knowledge and use of the English language (depending on the duration of stay) as well as enhanced self-confidence. Young learners become noticeably independent through their experience in attending Taupo Language.

Equally important is the value of outcomes to other key stakeholders. The local community appreciates the opportunity for cultural exchanges through hosting international learners. A local school spoke highly of a mutually beneficial relationship, where Taupo Language arranges homestay placement and payments, airport transfers, student counsellors and overseas marketing. The local school was unable to provide such facilities at suitable cost. The current arrangements meant that the local school is able to receive the benefits of having such international learners from Taupo Language attending the school. Activities providers benefit from the extra custom Taupo Language has brought to the region. Learners are involved in the community through volunteering. For example, during a recent camping trip, learners volunteered and performed basic maintenance work on a section of the New Zealand Cycle Trail. The evaluation team also sighted a newspaper article (dating back several years) reporting that the language school is estimated to have injected some \$3 million into the local economy each year. This is not insignificant for a small provincial town like Taupo. These activities and outcomes are in line with current Government priorities for promoting international education and tourism.

Taupo Language regards referrals and repeat business as crucial indicators of the value of outcomes to key stakeholders. On that count, the language school is performing remarkably well, with 69 per cent of its learners for the year ended June 2013 enrolled either as returning learners or referred by family and friends. A small

group of learners matriculate to secondary schools, and the owner/director has followed up on their progress and found that graduates of the pre-secondary school course are well-prepared for secondary school education in New Zealand. These are good self-assessment measures for a language school.

Taupo Language recently began collecting graduates' contact details and destination outcomes data, as the school is interested in maintaining longer-term contacts with graduates for better understanding of the value of studying at Taupo Language. This is not a simple task given the nature of a language school and the characteristics of its learners. As such, Taupo Language is commended for this initiative. The first analysis of this data is expected to be available in March 2014. NZQA looks forward to seeing the results and how this initiative contributes to continuous improvement of the language school by the next round of evaluation.

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

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

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

Taupo Language provides a range of programmes with a variety of combinations of English language tuition and different outdoor activities, catering to the demands and needs of its learners. The language school is flexible and responsive to learners' needs, identified at the commencement of studies as part of the placement test (which also determines the initial level of English language capability of the learner) and regularly reviewed through both formal and informal mechanisms during the course of studies. Individual learning plans are developed and used to guide learners in meeting their goals. At graduation, learners complete an exit questionnaire which includes a self-evaluation on whether their study objectives were met. Taupo Language uses the results of the questionnaire to establish whether the goals set down at the beginning of the course are achieved by the end. The evaluation team commends the school for this practice, especially the fact that the learner is involved throughout the process, from setting goals at the beginning to self-appraisal at exit, with regular review discussion between the teacher and the learner.

Taupo Language has many effective processes in place for the language school to self-assess against this key evaluation question. For example, programme review is a standing topic for discussion and reflection in the monthly meeting of teaching staff; feedback from agents is sought periodically to inform the changing needs of different markets and to identify possible areas for continuous improvement.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Teaching is highly effective at Taupo Language. All English teachers are experienced and appropriately qualified in teaching English as a foreign language. The evaluation team heard evidence that all academic staff at Taupo Language work collaboratively and constantly share their knowledge and practices, through peer observation, internal workshops and regular meetings. Teaching is routinely observed by the director of studies. Staff appraisals are conducted annually and appear to be effective in encouraging a self-reflective culture and driving professional development. A maximum class size of 10 contributes to an inclusive, family-like environment where teachers and learners establish a rapport and, in some cases, life-long friendships.

Effective moderation practices at Taupo Language ensure assessments are fair, reliable, reflect learning outcomes and, in turn, validate achievements and progress. Assessment materials are either pre-moderated prior to assessments, or pre-moderated licensed materials are used. Assessments are post-moderated internally. There is also regular external moderation with two other English New Zealand-affiliated language schools. Learners are informally assessed weekly, and formally every six weeks. Results are entered into a database for the ongoing tracking and monitoring of individual learner's results. The director of studies reviews the results and trends regularly and proactively attends to any concerns about academic progress. Learners interviewed confirmed that they are well informed about their results and progress through regular feedback and reports.

The evaluation team noted that, based on on-site observations and feedback from academic staff through various channels, there appears to be a common desire to upgrade some of the classroom technology. However, given that – based on all evidence available – learners did not seem to share the same concerns, this weakness does not detract from the excellent teaching and assessment practices.

Taupo Language has a wide variety of feedback mechanisms to gauge teaching effectiveness. For example, learners are invited to write to the owner/director each month on any issues or concerns; each learner has a one-to-one session with their teacher every six weeks to discuss academic progress and achievements, as well as learner feedback on any issues or concerns; learners are surveyed regularly and the results are collated and analysed by the management team, which showed the learners are highly satisfied with the teaching and their own progress. The evaluation team heard evidence of how a recent complaint was handled and resolved – and considered the whole process to be effective and respectful to all concerned, and clearly demonstrated that a reflective and learning culture is well embedded within the language school.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

Taupo Language is compliant with the minimum legal requirements specified in the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (Code of Practice). For example, regular reports on learners' progress and well-being are communicated in writing to the parents of learners under the age of 18 (via their agent, where applicable). The language school also conducts an annual self-review using a Code of Practice checklist to ensure continued compliance.

In addition, Taupo Language provides pastoral support to international learners well beyond the minimum requirements of the Code of Practice. There is a good deal of evidence to confirm that Taupo Language takes all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all its learners.⁴ This is especially relevant as a significant proportion of the language school's learners are below the age of 18 (as young as 13 years old).⁵

The evaluation team interviewed a group of learners, the majority of whom were under the age of 18. All learners interviewed were extremely happy with the language school and reported that they loved their experience in Taupo, including outdoor activities such as skiing, horse-riding, camping and mountain-biking. The evaluation team noted that the language school is equipped with bicycles for learners to use, and the table-tennis table proved to be highly popular outside class times. Suggestions contained in learner surveys and exit questionnaires are responded to promptly. For example, Taupo Language upgraded its computers and the WiFi network at the request of learners. Results from these regular feedback mechanisms were analysed by the language school and confirmed that all learners enjoyed their time at Taupo Language. The 2013 English New Zealand audit also commended on 'the excellent care [Taupo Language] provide[d] to all students, particularly the pastoral care involved with younger learners'.

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

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

⁴ Examples noted by the evaluation team include having a group of student counsellors, who speak the native language of the learner, meet and induct all learners under the age of 18, to assist their settling into Taupo and a homestay environment; police checks on all homestay families, not just those who host learners under the age of 18; re-checks of all homestay families on a three-year cycle; staff visits to all homestay families every six months for continuous assurance of their suitability; provision of comprehensive information about the school, the course, the homestay host family and Taupo to all learners prior to their leaving their country; an identity card with emergency contacts, such as the school and the learner's homestay host, being available from the first day of the learner's arrival.

⁵ At the time of the on-site visit, 28 of the 37 learners were below the age of 18 years.

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

The small management team is highly effective and efficient in carrying out the governance and management function. Each of the three members brings complementary skill sets to Taupo Language. The organisational structure, roles and divisional responsibilities are clearly defined, well documented in the quality management system and contribute to the sleek operation of the school. The management team meets weekly. The evaluation team sampled some meeting minutes as well as associated action plans and concluded that the meetings are purposeful and highly valuable.

The language school faced significant challenges from the global financial crisis and the historically high value of the New Zealand dollar. The owner/director responded superbly to those challenges – changes were made to effectively reflect financial reality, while also catering to the evolving needs of the different markets, which Taupo Language understands very well through its data collection and analysis. It is very clear to the evaluation team that Taupo Language has identified a niche market and tailored its offerings accordingly.

Outdoor adventure is a significant component of Taupo Language's programmes. (Although, given the reduction in demand as a result to the changing business environment previously mentioned, the significance of outdoor activities appears to be diminishing over time.) The language school is meticulous in the health and safety aspects of any outdoor activities arranged for the learners, and the owner/director personally administers a comprehensive quality assurance regime on all outdoor activities partners. The evaluation team sighted evidence of such a regime in operation and is satisfied that learners' safety is well cared for.

Taupo Language constantly seeks feedback from all its stakeholders, for the purpose of driving continuous improvement. The evaluation team noted evidence of the resolution of issues identified through regular feedback collection. For example, professional development requirements and performance management procedures are now incorporated into academic staff employment contracts upon receiving advice from an external consultant.

The database was demonstrated during the on-site visit, and the evaluation team found it to contain comprehensive information. Evidence is abundant that the language school analyses such information for market segmentation. There is room to improve the use of data for measuring and monitoring teaching effectiveness and overall outcomes at an organisational level.

Taupo Language actively liaises with two other English New Zealand-affiliated language schools for sharing intelligence and best practice. It is evident that Taupo Language considers English New Zealand as its primary association and has an extremely high regard for any advice tendered through that forum. The evaluation team noted one compliance issue identified during the 2013 English New Zealand audit, which was promptly attended to and is being managed effectively by Taupo Language.

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 **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

2.2 Focus area: International students

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

2.3 Focus area: General English

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

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Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Taupo Language:

- Improve self-assessment practices, especially in areas of external benchmarking that are relevant to the English language industry, and use all available data currently collected to understand the overall organisational educational performance.
- Continue liaising with selected English New Zealand-affiliated language schools that have been recently evaluated by NZQA and reported to have effectively adopted newer technologies, and assess whether the benefits of enhanced learning experience outweigh the costs of initial capital investment.
- Review current processes to ensure ongoing compliance with all standards prescribed by the industry body that the language school chooses to belong to.

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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 NZQE 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.

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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Taupo Language and Outdoor
Education Centre

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 11 January 2018

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MoE Number: 8954
NZQA Reference: C26052
Date of EER visit: 31 October–1 November 2017

Final report

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:	Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre (TLOEC)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	11 February 1993
Location:	111 Tuwharetoa Street, Taupo
Delivery sites:	As above
Courses currently delivered:	General English English and optional outdoors
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: nil, although there were a small number of students enrolled in English for Migrants (six) earlier in 2017. International: 25 equivalent full-time students at the time of the EER. Ages 13–40 plus – numbers vary from week to week; approximately half the students are under 18. Ethnicities over the past year include: Japanese 21 per cent; French Polynesian 14 per cent; Thai 11 per cent; Tahitian 9 per cent; New Caledonian 8 per cent; French 5 per cent; Brazilian 4 per cent; Korean 4 per cent; Saudi Arabian 3 per cent; Swiss 2 per cent; Indian 2 per cent; Other 3 per cent ('Other' includes: Chilean, Czech, German,

	Malaysian, Nicaraguan).
Number of staff:	Three full-time, six part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	General English English and optional outdoors
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>TLOEC is the only English language provider in the Taupo region. Core business is the provision of English tuition, study pathway assistance and homestay accommodation, as well as offering optional outdoor activities as a point of difference – more than 40 adventure activities are provided for students to enjoy.</p> <p>Students have diverse goals, ages and ethnicities. Students are attracted by the small-town atmosphere of Taupo, the English-language-only environment in the town, at the homestays and at the school, and the proximity to a variety of outdoor adventure activities. TLOEC has developed a reputation for attracting students from the same families, communities and countries. Approximately 35 per cent are returning students or 'word of mouth' enrolments.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>The PTE changed ownership in July 2017. Current staff continue to be employed by the new owner, and the previous owner is continuing to work at the school for 18 months to support the transition.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>At the previous external evaluation and review (EER) in 2014, NZQA was Highly Confident in the educational performance and Confident in the capability in self-assessment of TLOEC. NZQA made three recommendations: that TLOEC improve self-assessment practices, continue liaising with selected English New Zealand-affiliated language schools, and review current processes to ensure ongoing compliance with all standards prescribed by the industry body that the language school chooses to belong to.</p> <p>TLOEC is a member of English New Zealand. An English New Zealand audit was completed in August 2017 with three commendations and no recommendations or requirements.</p>

Other: TLOEC is also a member of Study Waikato and Study Taupo – local groups of international education providers.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas were chosen in consultation with the management team at TLOEC and represent current delivery in Taupo. The following focus areas were included in the EER:

International students: support and wellbeing

This is a mandatory focus area – at the time of the EER all students were internationals.

General English

The primary function of TLOEC is to provide English tuition to international students for varying lengths of study, at different levels, to meet a range of individual goals for each student.

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.

Prior to the EER, the lead evaluator discussed the proposed site visit with the owner/director, the director of studies, and staff members to finalise the scope and agenda and respond to queries regarding the EER policy and process. A self-assessment summary was supplied in advance of this meeting, and further documentation was provided to the EER team to support the plan of inquiry.

The on-site visit was conducted over two days in Taupo by a team of two evaluators, one with specialist knowledge of English teaching. The evaluators interviewed the owner/director, director of studies, marketing director (previous owner), teaching staff, current and past students, student counsellors, homestay parents, and local primary and secondary schools. A range of documentation was reviewed and student files and other records were checked for compliance with regulations.

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*
- *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.*

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.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre**.

TLOEC is achieving a high standard of educational performance relative to its role as a small regional organisation and its priority on providing a curriculum to meet the diverse needs of the international students. Key strengths are:

- Students develop and enhance their English language skills in a strongly supportive learning environment. These skills are immediately applicable in their daily lives and enable the students to contribute positively within their homestay and the local community.
- Comprehensive, relevant academic programmes are student-focused and have a clear emphasis on expected levels of achievement which align with English New Zealand standards.² The progress testing system with embedded self-review by students informs the regular teacher-student discussions and reviews of progress. Teachers value the collaborative sharing of teaching resources, the discussions at staff meetings and the professional development opportunities, and understand how these practices are improving their effectiveness.
- Students are actively engaged in their learning, are improving their English language skills and capabilities, and are gaining confidence and fluency in all aspects of communication. Small class sizes, placement in appropriate levels of learning, and the commitment of well-qualified staff contribute to individualised learning. Students valued the diversity of ethnicity and inclusiveness of the learning environment where students from all cultures, language abilities and backgrounds contribute to improved cultural understanding.
- The organisation is effectively managed, with a clear quality strategy to ensure that each student has a positive experience and goes on to recommend TLOEC to others. Strong relationships have been developed with the international education community in Taupo. TLOEC has taken a lead role with early childhood, primary and secondary providers to set up networks to develop innovative ways to support and pathway international students in the area. The new owner has put in place succession strategies to ensure a seamless transition over the next 18 months.

² Refer conclusions and recommendations in Taupo Language English New Zealand Audit Report, 16 August 2017, pp22-23

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre**.

- Self-assessment is comprehensive and systematic. Increased attention to data collection and analysis to inform decision-making and identify progress and improvement is evident. This data is now providing good information on trends and is able to be evaluated against TLOEC benchmarks.
- An internal review calendar is used to systematically monitor progress and achievement against the NZQA key evaluation questions and the English New Zealand standards, resulting in regular updating of overview documentation and action plans.
- There is good evidence of a range of purposeful and systematic feedback mechanisms such as surveys, review meetings and feedback strategies being used to monitor academic progress and student support such as student counsellors, homestays and outdoor activities.
- Teaching staff receive feedback on their teaching from a number of sources including student satisfaction surveys, observations from peers and the director of studies, and annual performance reviews. Daily discussions covering operational matters and student concerns enable quick responses to put in place any additional support required.

TLOEC has effective self-assessment which is embedded within the practices of the organisation and is contributing to valued outcomes for the students and other stakeholders.

Findings³

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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

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

The overall measure of achievement is to successfully meet individual student goals. There is good evidence of progress through comprehensive and regular testing, with individual reports and interviews identifying achievement of these personal goals. The internal benchmark, set at 95 per cent for full-time students to progress to the next level at the end of each 12-week block of learning, is being consistently met.

Progress reports are individualised, with both past and current test marks. Along with the student's self-review ('can-do' statements), these reports are the basis of reflection at regular tutorials with the teacher to discuss progress against achievement goals. Students develop confidence, independence and self-review capabilities through this review process.

A small number of students study English to improve their IELTS (International English Language Testing System) results. These students are achieving assessment results in the IELTS internal pre-test which are consistent with the external results achieved. This benchmarking is an indicator of quality outcomes.

The organisation has a clear understanding of student achievement through gathering a range of data and evidence which is being analysed, benchmarked and monitored to inform internal review processes and improvements.

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

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

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

Students value the positive and engaging learning environment provided by TLOEC. The inclusive, supportive and welcoming culture enables a diverse group of international students to improve their communication skills and participate in a range of activities in an English-only setting close to nature. The English-only

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

policy at the school, within the homestay and within Taupo is one of the key benefits of studying at TLOEC. This is well recognised by the students.

TLOEC delivers valued outcomes to students and stakeholders through:

- Providing flexible learning pathways and opportunities for a range of international students who have individual goals and study timeframes. For example, students may be locally employed and need to improve their oral communication by undertaking a short English course.
- Preparing students to enter local high schools with the relevant level of English complemented by additional maths and English classes, providing a seamless transition. The recent approval from the Tertiary Education Commission, Ministry of Education, and NZQA enables students to achieve NCEA credits for the maths and/or science assessments at TLOEC through the mathZwise⁴ initiative.
- The strong network of homestay families contributes to the student experience by involving students in the New Zealand way of life, providing a safe English-speaking home environment and supporting participation in a range of local activities. Students build strong relationships with their homestay families which last beyond their time in New Zealand.
- A range of initiatives to support local education providers, such as the 'parent and child' initiative with the local primary schools. This enables non-English speaking parents to study English at TLOEC while their children are at school to improve and support English spoken in the home to benefit the family.

Stakeholder feedback – including exit interviews – shows a high level of satisfaction with overall student care, academic achievement, wellbeing and contribution to the local area. TLOEC has a strong reputation for quality English language provision and this is confirmed by the recent English New Zealand audit outcomes.

⁴ mathZwise is a programme of study jointly provided by TLOEC and the secondary schools in the area, to improve maths and science outcomes for international students to ensure that they retain their skills through targeting the specialist English requirements of these subjects.

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

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

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

TLOEC is meeting the most important needs of the students and stakeholders. The organisation places a high priority on meeting student needs and being a really strong English language provider. There is a strong sense of collaboration, collegiality and sharing among staff to provide a flexible learning environment teaching English to a diverse group of international students, each with their own individual goals and reasons for study.

Curriculum delivery is well planned and regularly reviewed, with clearly articulated learning outcomes and expected standards of achievement. This is verified in the 2017 English New Zealand audit report. Regular teacher meetings discuss ways to improve teaching and assessment practice, currency of resources and feedback from students. The recent decision to change the course book was made by the teaching staff because of its links with the CEFR.⁵ This provides a clear set of learning outcomes for each level for both students and teachers. There is evidence that this change has contributed to a positive upward trend in progress test results. Another improvement resulted from student survey feedback requesting more pre-teaching of examination and testing material to provide a more structured understanding of testing. An increase in formative testing provides this clarity and has contributed to a positive lift in achievement.

Well-qualified, highly committed staff provide a supportive and positive learning environment. Comprehensive progress testing, with self-review by students embedded in the feedback process, is a key feature of assessment at TOELC. Internal moderation is completed at staff meetings with external moderation carried out by two external providers to give the organisation assurance of the quality of their assessment practice.

Students record consistently high rates of satisfaction with their study and have good levels of achievement. These indicate the organisation's effectiveness in meeting student needs.

⁵ Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, www.coe.int/lang-CEFR

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

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

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

Students have their English language level and individual goals assessed on entry to identify class placement and awareness of student aspirations for their time at the school. This entry process provides confidence that students are enrolled in the right class. An exit survey captures how well the students' goals and expectations have been met. The analysis shows that there is a high level of satisfaction against all indicators – consistently between 95 per cent and 99 per cent – and these are well above the ISB⁶ benchmarks.

Students value the orientation process. It is well planned with clear guidelines and information in student handbooks. The integration of the student counsellors into the orientation is innovative and provides an opportunity for the support relationship to be developed on the first day. These counsellors provide 'first language' support which includes explanations of the school rules, homestay rules and the complaints process and guidance to open a bank account. Students are introduced to activities in the local community, followed by additional contact as required to meet the pastoral care support for each student. Strong student-staff relationships exist, with students indicating that their teacher is their first point of contact when support is required.

Flexibility and agility in meeting a range of diverse tuition needs is a strength of the organisation. A range of enquiries are received from international visitors wanting to explore English language study possibilities to meet different needs. TLOEC offers diagnostic testing to give potential students accurate information about their levels and options for study.

To enhance the student culture and involvement in the New Zealand lifestyle, students are involved in a range of optional activities at the school and in the community including volunteering at events, cultural festivals, outdoor activities, sporting events and Friday afternoon activities in the town. Overall, current and past students valued their educational experience at TLOEC and would recommend studying at the school to family and friends.

⁶ International Student Barometer

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

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

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

TLOEC has effective, supportive leadership and clear management roles and responsibilities to maintain operational oversight. These are strongly aligned to the mission 'to provide a safe learning environment where students from all cultures, language abilities and backgrounds are respected and encouraged'. Management has made effective decisions over the past four years to:

- use qualitative and quantitative data to improve the tracking of student progress, teacher performance, student needs analyses and better knowledge of stakeholder needs
- update databases to include CEFR descriptors in reports, to monitor agent performance, to review activities operators' safety effectiveness, and monitor homestay providers
- improve and extend the internal review process to include an annual summary
- improve the school's financial management through the employment of a new accounts manager and the installation of XERO (accounting software) to provide better information to manage expenses.

The effectiveness of teaching staff is reviewed through a well-understood performance model. Peer observations and discussion of student feedback and student achievement are key components of the enhanced annual performance review discussion with the director of studies. New staff are inducted, closely monitored and well supported to settle into their roles. Increasing opportunities for staff development are evident, with outcomes shared with other staff to inform improved practice. It is important to ensure that all staff have opportunities to build capability in their roles as these are adjusted to meet the changes in management structure.

The change in ownership is being managed with good lead-in times. Areas of management and compliance are being handed over in planned ways to support the changes. The previous owner will be retained to provide continued management of marketing, school relationships with other schools, agents and organisations, and orientation. This is a deliberate strategy of the new owner. Staff have all been retained, systems and processes continued, and some areas for improvement identified such as increasing the use of digital technology to support learning. TLOEC clearly understands its responsibility for the achievement and welfare of international students. Support strategies are effective in providing a caring, supportive, friendly and culturally inclusive environment.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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

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

TLOEC manages its compliance accountabilities and responsibilities effectively.

Systems and processes to maintain compliance with the Code of Practice⁷ are in place. Self-reviews against the Code have been completed in 2016 and 2017 and are an ongoing part of the internal review process. There is a need to keep up to date with changes to ensure consistency and accuracy in documentation. The PTE needs to ensure it has systems to support the proposed increase in student numbers, especially those under 18 years of age.

The English New Zealand audit verifies that TLOEC complies with the organisation's requirements.

TLOEC undertakes a range of annual reviews including monitoring of agents, homestay providers and outdoor activity operators. Improvements are identified and actions taken to ensure compliance with relevant rules and legislation to ensure the safety of students and staff. These reviews are effectively managed by the previous owner and are an integral part of organisational practice. There is a need to ensure that these monitoring and review practices for compliance areas are continued and enhanced under the new roles and responsibilities.

The evaluation team checked international student files and homestay monitoring records for compliance with regulations. The files support the enrolment decisions made and meet immigration and NZQA requirements. With the planned recruitment of a new homestay co-ordinator, it will be necessary to provide training to maintain the current level of recording and monitoring.

With the change of ownership, the new owner is responsible for quality and compliance. It is important that current practices are maintained and improved to ensure that the organisation continues to be effective in this area.

⁷ Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: International Students: Support and Wellbeing

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

2.2 Focus area: General English

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

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Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre:

- Continue to ensure that the transition to new ownership maintains the quality of the outcomes for learners, and continues to improve and maintain the systems and processes leading to successful outcomes.
- Ensure that the importance of monitoring and review of the requirements of the Education (Pastoral care of international students) Code of Practice are fully understood and complied with by the new owners.

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