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Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Zealand Skydiving School Limited
trading as New Zealand Skydiving
School

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 11 July 2018

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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:	New Zealand Skydiving School Limited trading as New Zealand Skydiving School
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	13 December 2000
Location:	73 Green Road, Parakai, Auckland
Delivery sites:	As above
Courses currently delivered:	Diploma in Commercial Skydiving (Level 5)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 26 (25 equivalent full-time students in 2017); no Māori and Pasifika students International: six (3.6 equivalent full-time students in 2017)
Number of staff:	Four full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	The school is accredited to offer the above diploma.
Distinctive characteristics:	New Zealand Skydiving School shares governance and management with Skydive Auckland Limited ¹ , although they are separate legal entities. The two businesses share the West Auckland airport site. The PTE is affiliated to the New Zealand

¹ Skydive Auckland is a commercial skydiving business.

Parachute Industry Association and the New Zealand Parachute Federation.

Recent significant changes: International student numbers have declined from 15 at the time of the last external evaluation and review (EER) in 2014, to six in 2017. English is the first language for some, but not all international students.

Previous quality assurance history: The last EER found that NZQA was Confident in both the PTE's educational performance and its self-assessment capability. The school has 100 per cent New Zealand Immigration visa approval rates for 2018.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER was:

- International students: support and wellbeing. This is a mandatory requirement for organisations delivering education and training to international students.
- Diploma in Commercial Skydiving (Level 5). This was selected as it is the sole programme delivered.

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.

Two evaluators conducted the on-site visit at the West Auckland site over two days. The evaluators interviewed the chief executive, the operations manager, the course director and the alternative class tutor, the office administrator and current students. Phone interviews were conducted with the New Zealand Parachute Association chief executive officer and skydiving business operators. A range of documentation was reviewed including a self-assessment summary, investment plan, 2017 annual Code of Practice review as well as the PTE's website.

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 fraud²*
- *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.*

² 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 and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **New Zealand Skydiving School**.

The central purpose of the school is to produce graduates with the entry-level capability required to work and progress in the skydiving industry. The school has consistently met this primary objective since the last EER. Nearly all students (97-100 per cent) completed the Diploma in Commercial Skydiving and over 90 per cent were working in the industry three months after graduation. Most graduates stay employed and the majority progress to more advanced roles over time. Industry operators say the graduates have the knowledge, skills and attributes they require.

The school has mostly highly effective processes that support this excellent educational performance. The school actively engages with and contributes to the local and international skydiving industry, thereby staying current with industry requirements. Most significantly, the school shares the airport premises with their co-owned commercial skydiving business.³ The students observe, are mentored and progressively participate in the business activities. For the last 12 weeks of the programme, the students are placed with business operators, typically gaining employment with these operators. An experienced and capable skydiver trainer is the primary instructor. A mix of appropriate delivery styles is used.

Moderation of assessments is robust and scheduled, though not all modules had been moderated at the time of the site visit. This small, tight-knit school has supported nearly all students to stay and complete their studies. Student feedback is typically favourable. The leadership of the school is capable and effective in producing an improving high level of performance. The school has a strong, compliance-focused culture which has been effective in managing key compliance accountabilities. However, the sole instance of an agent referring an international student was not managed or reviewed well.

The school has a clear and strong focus on quality improvement. There are robust systems to collect and analyse important data; for example, the quality of the achievement and destination information was high. The evaluators saw live achievement and performance data (including periodic stakeholder feedback/input and school interventions) being tracked and used to inform organisational decision-making. Sometimes this has led to interventions to support individual students; and sometimes this has resulted in organisational improvements: an enhanced interview process, a revised workplace module, the purchase of a nearby house which now accommodates most students. The organisation assesses the impact of

³ See TEO in context: Distinctive characteristics.

the changes made. The school commissioned a broad and sound external review which led to clear changes, including the mapping of a key process and setting up an advisory group. Self-assessment processes are part of the ordinary operations of the school and contribute to quality improvements in nearly all areas of the organisation.

Findings⁴

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**.

Educational achievement was exemplary from 2014 to 2017. Nearly all students (97-100 per cent) completed the Diploma in Commercial Skydiving. Māori and international students achieve at similar rates to all students. The analysis of achievement is comprehensive and insightful and used to make improvements. Most notably, the school identified that the few non-completions occurred during the work placement module and made changes to address this (see also Findings 1.3). Subsequently, the grades for the module and overall qualification completions improved, confirming that the changes were effective. Students develop relevant knowledge, skills and personal attributes. Each student receives a formal achievement report which outlines their grades, industry certification, skydiving experience, capability development while on work placement, and a professional reference. The assessment and moderation undertaken gives overall confidence in these results. The school closely monitors individual academic progress and effectively supports students who face challenges; this is reflected in the high level of achievement (see also Findings 1.4).

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**.

New Zealand Skydiving School provides high-value outcomes for its graduates and the skydiving industry. The central purpose of the school is to produce graduates who have the entry-level capability to effectively work and progress in the skydiving industry. The school has met this primary need for nearly all graduates since the last EER. Through their training, the diploma graduates gain the industry-recognised 'A' and 'B' parachuting certification.⁵ By maintaining ongoing contact with all recent graduates, the school can confirm that nearly all were working in the

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 <https://www.nzpia.co.nz>

industry three months after their graduation, nearly always in the business where they had their work placement.

The school plays a critical role in providing commercial skydiving operators with trained staff. The skydiving business operators interviewed said the graduates had the required capability for entry-level roles and that untrained staff or overseas-trained staff they had hired, typically did not have this essential level of capability. The operators strongly preferred employing graduates from the school. Most graduates since 2014 are still employed in the skydiving industry (for example, 74 per cent of the 2014 graduates). Additionally, over time, an increasing proportion of the graduates are working in more advanced skydiving roles (and gaining further industry certification).

New Zealand Skydiving School has developed a recognised expertise, particularly in skydiving training. Through their active participation, this expertise adds value to the Australian and New Zealand industry. Through its training delivery, student work placements and active participation in the industry, the school has a rich understanding of the outcomes it is producing.

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 **Good**.

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

The design and delivery of the diploma programme mostly matches the needs of the students and the skydiving industry. The school programme stays current with industry requirements through participation in various industry bodies, regularly attending local and international parachuting industry conferences, regular feedback from business operators offering work placements, and advice from the PTE's industry advisory group. For example, feedback from an operator led to a different parachute packing method being taught. The most important mechanism for staying current is through the school sharing management, staff and a site with its Civil Aviation Authority-certified, commercial skydiving business.⁶ Management and staff are therefore embedded in the live industry.

Students learn through observing, staff demonstrating and mentoring them, and students progressively participating in the business. For the last 12 weeks of the programme, students undertake structured work placement with a New Zealand or overseas skydiving operator, where they more fully apply their learning. The placement works well for both the graduate and the business operator as it offers a

⁶ Skydive Auckland

finite opportunity to try out working in the industry; in most cases, this leads to the graduate gaining paid work. After weaker achievement in the work placement module, the school made changes, including developing a more meaningful safety management assessment based on their new workplace environment. Grades significantly improved in 2017.

The school identifies how well the programme matches individual student needs through an application process, modified after six early withdrawals in 2016 – these fell to just two in 2017. An experienced and capable skydiving trainer delivers the programme. This person is currently enrolled in an adult teaching qualification. Skydive Auckland staff with expertise also teach specific content.

The school has two intakes each year, enabling a senior group to support a newer intake while consolidating their learning. This approach to teaching has many clear benefits, but when Skydive Auckland is busy, teaching capacity can be stretched. International students whose English is not their first language add to the teaching load. The school mostly manages these tensions well. The moderation undertaken is robust; however, the schedule has not yet covered all modules. These gaps are not significant and are now being effectively managed.

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**.

The school has been effective in supporting nearly all students to stay involved and complete their studies. The high retention levels, qualification completions, along with positive student and graduate feedback, verify the effectiveness of the support provided. The students are involved in small classes, closely supported by a course director and a small team of staff familiar with the challenges the training poses for students. The students develop strong bonds through the intensive skydiving training which explicitly encourages interpersonal and team-building skills, including nominating a class captain. Newly enrolled international students are paired with a buddy from the senior class. Additional teaching support is provided to students whose first language is not English. Staff mentor students who are having educational or other challenges.

The school has developed a formal student communication system where students provide feedback through one-to-one interviews with the course director or through online surveys. Since the last EER, the school has made a significant investment in purchasing a house adjacent to the school, which is located in an isolated rural location. Most current students reside there, developing a tight-knit community where students say they 'live and breathe skydiving, 24/7'. The school in recent

years has provided equipment rental to support Māori and Pasifika students and students with financial challenges.

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**.

The leadership has been effective in supporting a high and improving level of educational achievement and performance since the last EER. The school is successfully fulfilling its core purpose: providing graduates with the capabilities the skydiving industry requires for them to effectively carry out entry-level roles. Educational achievement and academic leadership has improved. The active engagement of the leadership with industry stakeholders is a key resource, along with running their parallel commercial skydiving operations. The organisation has recruited, retained and developed its trainers; for example, offering some staff flexible working conditions. There is a clear expectation of a high level of workplace performance.

The organisation has developed a clear culture focused on quality improvement. An external review of the school has led to enhanced quality systems. The evaluators saw examples of live achievement and performance data – including periodic stakeholder feedback/input and school interventions – being tracked and used to assess performance and inform decision-making. The school commissioned a robust external review which led to an on-site administrator being appointed, prioritising of professional development, and process mapping of student feedback, which now runs parallel with a student’s journey from their initial interview through to the long-term monitoring of their destination outcomes. Self-assessment processes are part of the ordinary operations of the school, supporting ongoing improvements.

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**.

New Zealand Skydiving School has a strongly embedded, compliance-focused culture. This reflects, in part, the organisation operating in a high-risk industry where compliance and, in particular, health and safety are critical day-to-day components. The operations manager has a recognised industry expertise in the latter and is currently enrolled in the New Zealand Diploma in Health and Safety Management. The organisation has well-organised manual and online systems for maintaining data, including academic records. There is a clear programme schedule showing the hours delivered and that attendance is monitored. The school has sound assessment and moderation practices. The training staff are appropriately experienced and qualified.

The school enrolls international students (six students in 2017) each year. Key staff had attended Code of Practice training workshops. The evaluation team's review of the international student files identified no significant gaps. All international students but one were self-referred. For the sole agent referral, only standard enrolment procedures were followed.⁷ The school did not carry out a reference check, have a formal written agreement, and take other actions outlined in the Code of Practice.⁸ The school's annual review of the code covered all 10 pastoral care areas, describing the processes used. The annual review did not provide clear evidence of how well these processes ensured compliance and delivered high-quality pastoral care outcomes for international students. In the case of the agent used, the review did not assess whether the school's practice had been compliant and what changes might be needed for the future. The school has stated it will not accept agent referrals in the future.

⁷ The student completed the programme, gained work in the industry and was positive about the learning experience.

⁸ For further details, refer to Clauses 13 and 14 of the Code of Practice:
<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Code-of-Practice/tertiary-guidelines-code-of-practice.pdf>

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Diploma in Commercial Skydiving (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**.

2.2 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 **Good**.

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that New Zealand Skydiving School:

- Analyse the aggregate feedback collected from students, graduates and employers.
- Systematically review how effectively the pastoral care processes used ensure the school is compliant and is delivering high-quality pastoral outcomes for its international students.

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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