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# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Abacus Counselling, Training and  
Supervision Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 15 July 2016

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# Purpose of this Report

*The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.*

## Introduction

### 1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Abacus Counselling, Training and Supervision Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	26 January 2004
Location:	8 Pompallier Terrace, Ponsonby, Auckland
Delivery sites:	Client premises
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Certificate of Addiction and Mental Health Supervision (Training Scheme) (Level 6)</li><li>• Short courses on Mental Health Supervision skills and knowledge, under a contract with Counties Manukau District Health Board</li><li>• Short information seminars tailored for groups such as secondary school students, teachers, police, youth workers</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 9.33 EFTS (equivalent full-time students)  26 students were enrolled in the Certificate of Addiction and Mental Health Supervision (Level 6) in 2015; sixteen are enrolled for 2016.  Abacus delivers a substantial number of part-day or two-day courses throughout the year for a range of clients, including health care workers and supervisors, secondary school students, police

	and 'consumers'. <sup>1</sup>
Number of staff:	Six full-time and two part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificate of Addiction and Mental Health Supervision (Training Scheme) (Level 6)</li> <li>• Short courses in Alcohol and Other Drug Addiction Supervision as part of the Counties Manukau DHB contract</li> </ul>
Distinctive characteristics:	Abacus provides counselling services as well as training.
Recent significant changes:	None
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>NZQA was Highly Confident in Abacus's educational performance and Highly Confident in its capability in self-assessment at the previous external evaluation and review (EER) in 2012.</p> <p>There are no external moderation requirements for this organisation.</p> <p>Abacus has met the Counties Manukau DHB contract requirements for number of hours and quality of training, determined by feedback.</p>

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected for the EER included:

- Governance, management and strategy

This focus area is a mandatory requirement.

- Certificate of Addiction and Mental Health Supervision (Training Scheme) (Level 6)

This year-long course consists of six modules delivered face to face and online. There are currently sixteen students enrolled for 2016.

- Short courses for the Counties Manukau DHB

These short courses aim to meet the needs of consumers and specialist addiction practitioners for upskilling in the delivery of services to clients.

The agreed scope covers half of the organisation's formal training activities.

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<sup>1</sup> People who consume alcohol or other drugs and are addicted to their use.

### 3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.*

The EER was conducted over two days by two evaluators at the organisation's head office in Ponsonby, Auckland. An observer from NZQA's risk and compliance team was present as part of staff development.

The EER team interviewed the four directors, who fulfil management roles as well as deliver training in their specialist areas. The EER team conducted interviews with a full-time tutor who delivers training in secondary schools as well as general courses, and a staff member responsible for the online content and course organisation. Phone conversations were held with two clients, both of whom have attended training at Abacus and refer their staff to courses.

A range of documents were reviewed to support the evaluative conversations, including strategic plans, course reviews, Counties Manukau DHB training reviews, student assignments and student evaluation analysis.

# Summary of Results

## Statements of confidence in educational performance and capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Abacus Counselling, Training and Supervision Limited**.

The key reasons for this include:

- Abacus provides training courses that extensively cover a range of people's needs across different levels in the alcohol and other drug addiction field. The range of clients includes consumers, hospital staff, specialist addiction staff, non-governmental organisations, medical practitioners, schools, police, and community groups, mainly in Auckland but also in other parts of the country.
- All students enrolled in the initial delivery of the training scheme completed successfully. Short course completions and feedback on the training also show high rates of success.
- The organisation has evidence of successful youth initiatives delivered in partnership with youth providers, Counties Manukau DHB, and the police to provide relevant training on addiction awareness to youth.
- Abacus has strong relationships with its major stakeholders, which include Counties Manukau DHB, Addiction Practitioners Association Aotearoa-New Zealand (Dapaanz), and non-governmental organisations that require trained supervisors. This is helping to increase the capability of workers in this area to provide specialist supervision in the alcohol and other drug addiction field.
- Abacus demonstrates its responsiveness to demands for supervision training by providing up-to-date courses tailored to clients' needs. Clients who have completed the certificate course can apply to become a registered practitioner with Dapaanz. Short courses enable people to renew membership or registration.
- Abacus tutors provide professional supervision services for clients in the workplace to reinforce the training. This also helps to inform course reviews to enable the organisation to cater to the dynamic needs of the sector. Workplace supervision is part of the value added to ensure the needs of clients and students are identified and catered to, and enables the students to relate the learning to their practice.
- The tutors have published research in their specialist fields. Research is disseminated at national and international conference as well as through relevant research publications. All teaching staff are members of Dapaanz.

- The organisation has robust self-assessment and reflective practices embedded throughout all levels of its activities, from teaching through to website development and management. All staff demonstrated reflective thinking in assessing whether the training is meeting the needs of clients and identifying improvements. Information on whether the training is meeting needs is gathered through ongoing communication with the wider sector, contracts with major clients, review of training feedback, and peer reviews.
- A well-established governance and management structure ensures that day-to-day activities are monitored regularly and that long-term planning and monitoring is conducted of business plan goals, with clear objectives to provide effective leadership in all aspects of the organisation's activities.

# Findings<sup>2</sup>

## 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 **Excellent**.

Since the course began in 2014, 26 students have enrolled in the 11-week training scheme certificate for mental health supervision. All 26 students have successfully completed the six modules and corresponding assignments. They have also attended a two-day workshop required to complete the course. Each assignment is reviewed by the tutors to identify whether students need more time to submit assignments or require further support to help them to achieve. Students' feedback on workshops shows nearly 100 per cent of the students were highly satisfied or satisfied with the skills they gained from the workshops. When enough data is available, Abacus could undertake a formal analysis of assessment results for each course. This would help to identify any issues students have with particular modules in the training.

Feedback about the overall course from graduates is gathered individually from each student and their manager during workplace supervisory contacts to determine how well the students apply their learning. The feedback shows that the training enhances workplace supervision skills in the addiction field and confirms that students are improving skills through the techniques taught. Feedback from attendees on short courses delivered by Abacus on behalf of the Counties Manukau DHB shows significant improvement in attendees' alcohol and other drug knowledge and confidence working with a range of clients including youth, those with mental health issues, and other groups.

Overall, the organisation has developed good systems to check students' progress and achievement using students' workshop evaluations and informal feedback.

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<sup>2</sup> 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 **Excellent**.

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

The key value of the certificate programme is in the specialised training of a wide range of people in supervising practitioners working in the mental health and alcohol and other drug addictions field. The Counties Manukau courses includes training in addiction and co-existing issues for people working in the areas of mental health, medicine, community work, secondary schooling, policing and social work, as well as the consumers. Abacus's quarterly report to Counties Manukau DHB shows that it is providing training to more than 100 practitioners, which is the majority of practitioners in the addiction field in the Auckland region.

The Counties Manukau DHB clients use the short courses for staff refresher training and for upskilling its workforce in supervisory skills. The Counties Manukau DHB evaluation report for 2015 states: 'Overall, the organisations trained regarded their knowledge of alcohol and other drug and related issues to have improved substantially and be very relevant and useful' (p.3/51). The value of the courses is reinforced by an extension of the Counties Manukau DHB contract at the end of 2015 for another five years.

The value of the training is also indicated by feedback from a known and highly qualified supervision specialist who commented that the specialised training was an added advantage in their own practice and helped rejuvenate their skills with up-to-date practices and research.

Feedback from students states that the formalising of their existing skills was of benefit, and also helped develop skills for them to move into supervisory positions within their organisation. The certificate is also a recognised pathway for promotion by organisations in the Counties Manukau DHB region. Students interviewed by the EER team referred to gaining skills in groups and in one-to-one supervision to help them build the skills of their work teams.

Other evidence of the value of the training includes students' feedback to the tutors about improved relationships with the person they are supervising. Success on the course has also stimulated an interest in further study (or writing).

Other consumers who attend the short courses gain skills to help themselves and others, with some going into work in the field as mentors or peer support.

Abacus has a partnership with the police to provide an education programme to youth. An evaluation report sighted by the evaluators about this initiative shows that it has been successful in reducing youth reoffending. Presentations by Abacus staff in secondary schools are also beneficial because they provide knowledge and awareness of the signs of addiction.

Abacus actively maintains links in the community through its involvement in advisory groups, and training and supervisory services, forming a community of practice where people find training to suit them and increase the breadth of their supervisory skills. It also enables the dissemination of knowledge and develops or maintains the tutors' knowledge of the sector.

Ongoing relationship and involvement in the sector provides evidence that the training, both the tailored short courses and the training scheme certificate course, are relevant and are helping those working in supervisory positions or within the addiction field. This is supported by the end-of-course surveys and follow-up with clients.

### 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**.

Abacus developed the training scheme certificate from an identified need for specialist training in supervision in the alcohol and other drug field through contact with counsellors and community workers in the health sector. Students are required to have experience working in supervisory roles before they enrol.

The level 6 certificate is recognised for registration as an addiction practitioner with Dapaanz, the association for people with an interest in addiction, or for continuing professional development for existing addiction practitioners, social workers, psychologists and support workers. The content is aligned to the Dapaanz guidelines and mental health guidelines. A core aspect is the teaching of motivational interviewing techniques used in therapy to change behaviours, which is used by alcohol and other drug addiction practitioners and works well with other health therapy models.

The training is aligned to the students' workplace needs, with four of the modules involving on-job observations along with two modules at two-day workshops. The course consists of six modules delivered over 11 weeks. The students have access to an online portal where they can retrieve the resources for each module, including DVDs and current research.

The short courses Abacus provides meet the needs of the wider sector for alcohol and other drug training and for raising awareness of alcohol and other drug supervision skills in the mental health sector. The courses are tailored to the needs of the particular group and/or organisation for training in alcohol and other drug knowledge and skills.

Four types of client attend the short courses: specialist alcohol and other drug practitioners as part of their Dapaanz re-registration requirements; health providers, such as general practitioners, midwives, nurses, for training in recognising the

*Final Report*

signs of alcohol and other drug addiction and to learn about interventions; non-specialist/community workers, such as the staff of Child, Youth and Family and non-governmental organisations, police, and secondary schools; and consumers, that is the people who have alcohol and other drug issues and do the course to help themselves and/or to help others. The relationships developed by Abacus with a range of stakeholders helps to encourage support networking among the providers and consumers.

Abacus has partnerships with the police to provide information and advice to youth around addictions. Other initiatives for youth and Māori and Pasifika have also been successful in meeting needs. Abacus staff present talks and workshops and raise awareness of drug issues among youth. Police have seen better relationships with youth and a reduction in addiction-related crime.

Abacus is able to cover a range of needs by working with existing services to share professional knowledge and service. For example, a project with Youthline uses their staff youth expertise while Abacus provides the specialist supervisory skills and knowledge in helping youth who are at risk of addiction.

Abacus applies a reflective practice to the provision and review of training materials and resources to ensure they are current and cater to students' needs. Ongoing feedback received by the organisation from contractual audits, as well as course evaluations, shows a high level of satisfaction with the training activities. A range of feedback is used to inform programme development and delivery.

#### 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**.

The tutors provide effective teaching on supervisory knowledge and skills, as indicated in the mostly positive feedback from course evaluations and continuing referral from clients for their staff to Abacus courses. The tutors are well-qualified specialists in their fields, and this professional experience in counselling and supervision practice is part of the reason attributed by the directors and the evaluators to the effective delivery of the teaching content. Teaching practice is based on modelling the behaviour they would like supervisors to demonstrate. An example is the use of Motivational Interviewing techniques and questioning based on a Socratic teaching model.

The trainers are registered health practitioners who provide training for people working as supervisors and for people with alcohol and other drug additions. The tutors see learners taking on the skills and knowledge during workplace visits and ongoing supervision following the course. There are a range of techniques used for delivering the training scheme, which are supported by individual support online and face to face at workshops over the duration of the training course.

Abacus conducts regular reviews of individual teaching performance and achievement of personal development goals. Regular monthly peer supervision using ongoing review of collated students' feedback after each course is used to inform individual tutor's teaching performance and identify any changes needed. Students commented positively on the interaction with the tutors and opportunities for asking questions and discussing their own experiences, contributing to the high rate of satisfaction, along with having small groups of learners, relevant training materials and activities.

Co-teaching on the training scheme is used to reflect on teaching effectiveness and identify improvements. The tutors cross-mark each assignment against assessment criteria for moderation, and advice is sought from another staff member if there are any differences in views. A useful marking schedule with clear judgement guidelines would help to ensure assessment decisions are robust. Teaching effectiveness could also be further enhanced by attending or engaging in tertiary education teaching training and/or forums to maintain and refresh up-to-date teaching practices.

### 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**.

The organisation demonstrated that it has a good process for identifying students' needs and providing tailored support to enable them to achieve their learning goals. Part of the ethos of the supervision field is to provide a safe environment, which is reflected in the support provided by Abacus. This is contributing to the success of learners and matching the needs of the supervisory workforce.

Students receive timely information throughout their course, from the online login for the training scheme access through to materials and course outlines and comprehensive and relevant information provided while attending the short courses.

Students enrolled in the 11-week training scheme spoke of the usefulness of the website for accessing resources and requesting assistance while completing the distance learning. The website is of particular note as it is informative, well organised and actively maintained to ensure it is up to date and that students' queries are responded to in a timely manner.

Overall, Abacus demonstrated that its staff are responsive and flexible in their support. Satisfaction with the support shown is evident in the end-of-course evaluations, unsolicited feedback collected by the staff supervising students in their workplace, and from the ongoing contact with students' employers.

## 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**.

The four directors set strategic direction and develop business plans that are relevant to its mission for providing training in supervisory skills and knowledge. The directors together form an integrated organisation with a multi-disciplinary approach to meeting its strategic mission.

Educational concepts and understanding of practices is inherent in the clinical supervision backgrounds staff use to support learner achievement. All directors, who are also the trainers, provide clinical supervision which has its own philosophies and methodologies for training. This is suitable for the nature of the courses provided.

The nature of the organisation and its involvement with the broader mental health sector enables it to provide training and seminars to inform and develop the sector. The directors also conduct research towards understanding the alcohol and other drug environment. This research is disseminated nationally and internationally. This strong understanding of the sector helps Abacus to reach the majority of alcohol and other drug supervisors as well as social workers, the wider community, and consumers.

Communication within the organisation is open and transparent. Abacus provides a family environment with staff lunching together on site every day and inviting their community contacts where possible to discuss issues in the supervisory sector and develop understanding of the sector's issues.

Staff meet formally quarterly, and annual staff meetings are held to review and gather feedback. The directors review the strategic and business plans along with the quality improvement plan against performance indicators (Counties Manukau DHB and Abacus own indicators) annually. The reviews show that Abacus is meeting Counties Manukau DHB requirements. Abacus has excellent relationships with long-standing clients such as Phoenix and Odyssey which supports the excellent understanding and support the organisation provides in this specialised field.

Abacus has clear direction and a robust reflective culture which enables it to provide training to meet its goals, which are aligned with the needs of the sector.

## 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**.

### 2.2 Focus area: Certificate of Addiction and Mental Health Supervision (Level 6)

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: Counties Manukau District Health Board Project

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

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

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Abacus analyse grades awarded to help tutors to identify performance and individual improvements, as well as comparing cohorts, and to strengthen moderation and consistency.

# 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](http://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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