

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Ashburton Learning Centre
Incorporated

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 28 November 2014

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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:	Ashburton Learning Centre Incorporated
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	71 Park Street, Ashburton
Delivery sites:	As above and off site as required
First registered:	14 March 2008
Courses currently delivered:	Core Foundation Learners Adult Community Education (ACE) and Intensive Literacy and Numeracy, Workplace Learners, Modern Apprentices: Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation (BCITO), Motor Industry Training Organisation (MITO), Health and Safety Unit Training Scheme, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (including pre-paid English learners), Samoan Ladies Group (2012-2013), Ministry of Education Young Mothers (2013), Te Puni Kōkiri (2013), Te Reo Māori (tikanga and kawa), Computing Classes, Young Adult Learners (including 16 Plus-One-Day-Learners, BOOST Child Literacy Programme)
Number of students:	Domestic: 194, predominantly migrants; Māori (25) and Pasifika (three)
Number of staff:	14 full-time equivalents, including five volunteer tutors
Distinctive characteristics:	The rise in dairy farming in mid-Canterbury means a large workforce is required in farming and agricultural

support services. Much of this workforce comprises new migrants who seek Ashburton Learning Centre support. Unemployment is low in mid-Canterbury. While literacy and numeracy is the primary focus of Ashburton Learning Centre, it has responded to community needs by offering ESOL courses for new migrants and targeted programmes for specific learner groups, such as the Samoan Ladies Group and school leavers. Most students are migrants from countries such as Samoa, Philippines, Tonga, Cook Islands, Russia, Korea, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Japan, China, Nepal, Kenya, Portugal, Vietnam, Egypt, India, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Iraq. However, in 2014, of 194 students, 62 were New Zealand European.

- Recent significant changes: Ashburton Learning Centre developed a targeted literacy initiative that provides one-to-one tuition for seven and eight-year-olds who are under-achieving. The initiative is being piloted in three Ashburton schools in 2014.
- Previous quality assurance history: At the most recent NZQA external evaluation and review (EER) in 2011, Ashburton Learning Centre was found to be Highly Confident in both educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
- Other: While most training occurs at the Park Street premises, several programmes have been delivered in the community for learners who are unable to travel to town due to work or family circumstances. In 2013, Ashburton Learning Centre delivered tuition to 242 students through a number of contracts: Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (20 places), Modern Apprenticeship Contract (as required), Workplace Literacy Targeted Fund (55 places), Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Workplace Contract (15 places), Adult Community Education Provision (100 places), English for Migrants, BCITO (22 places), Open Wānanga (as required), Te Puni Kōkiri (six places), Ministry of Education Contract (five places). In 2014, all the above named contracts have been maintained, with increased places for some contracts, namely Adult Community Education (142 places), Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (21 places), TEC Workplace Contract (21 places). One contract, Workplace Literacy Targeted Fund, has

gone from 55 to 40 places in 2014, due to a reallocation of places based on regional needs.

Ashburton Learning Centre is a member of Literacy Aotearoa Inc and the Adult Literacy Practitioners Association. It receives funding from the TEC, Literacy Aotearoa and community trusts. Ashburton Learning Centre is an incorporated society and registered charity.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected were the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy, as well as the programmes offered in literacy and numeracy and ESOL. These focus areas covered the range of programmes of tuition at Ashburton Learning Centre.

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.

A team of two evaluators conducted the EER over one day at the Ashburton site. The team met with the chairperson of the governing advisory committee, the operational manager of Ashburton Learning Centre, the staff manager, a representative from the local Hukatere Marae, several staff members (including volunteers) and six students from across the programmes offered at Ashburton Learning Centre. The team sighted a range of documentation, including the self-assessment document provided prior to the EER visit, completed individual learning plans, minutes of volunteer, staff and advisory committee meetings, enrolment and assessment information and files of students across Adult Community Education, Intensive Literacy and Numeracy, and Workplace Literacy Targeted Fund programmes. They also sighted apprentice reports, documentation that recorded evidence of gains in students' confidence and self-esteem, and the operational manager's annual report to stakeholders which included the strategic plan for 2012-2015.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Ashburton Learning Centre Incorporated**.

- Ashburton Learning Centre achieves excellent levels of course completion in literacy and numeracy programmes and meets all contractual outcomes to funding bodies. It has received increased funded places for Adult Community Education, Intensive Literacy and Numeracy and TEC Workplace Contracts from 2013 to 2014, indicating that it is performing well against contracted outcomes.
- Students are assessed by the TEC assessment tool and interviewed about their goals prior to class placement. Ashburton Learning Centre matches each student with an appropriate tutor to assist with effective learning. Every student has a comprehensive individual learning plan which outlines academic, personal and social goals. The plans are reviewed informally each month and formally every six months. The majority of students meet their individual learning plan goals, indicating that teaching and learning is effective and that student goals are realistic and achievable.
- All tutors, paid or volunteer, have qualifications in adult literacy tuition and are experienced practitioners. Staff undertake regular professional development, are highly motivated, support each other and are committed to progressing learners' educational, personal and social goals.
- Ashburton Learning Centre makes an important contribution to individuals and the community by supporting new migrants' literacy and numeracy skills. This enables learners to secure work, support their families and integrate more fully into the community.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Ashburton Learning Centre Incorporated**.

- Ashburton Learning Centre is governed by an advisory committee comprising three sub-committees which work together to manage the operational and educational functions of the organisation. These committees are competency-based and have internal and external membership, providing a balanced, informed forum for decision-making.
- Ashburton Learning Centre has well-developed, professional relationships with community agencies and responds in a timely way to identified community needs. This responsiveness has led to word-of-mouth recommendations from previous students, their families and caregivers.

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- All areas of Ashburton Learning Centre's operation are reviewed regularly and systematically, including student feedback and changes made if required.
- Ongoing self-review has led to many improvements, including the development of specific programmes to accommodate ethnic diversity in the region.

Findings¹

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**.

Ashburton Learning Centre increases students' literacy, numeracy, personal and social skills, enabling them to participate more fully in the community. It accepts all students, including students with disabilities, students who have very low or no literacy and numeracy skills, and students with severe barriers to learning. Most have not achieved in other educational settings and many have had negative life experiences. A combination of unconditional positive regard from tutors to students, thorough assessment, placement with the most appropriate tutor, close monitoring of progress, and working at the student's pace enables students to achieve, sometimes for the first time. This progress is assisted by Ashburton Learning Centre's ability to use unpaid volunteer tutor time once the allocated funded student hours have expired.

An initial assessment test and interview and a detailed individual learning plan that is reviewed regularly effectively guides learning delivery. The majority of students meet their goals. Achievement is tracked by the TEC adult literacy and numeracy assessment tool. In 2014, Ashburton Learning Centre developed charts that show gains visually, which has been useful for staff and learners to review progress. Workplace learners are referred by employers, or self-refer, and are funded under contracts. Modern Apprentices complete the TEC assessment tool and the Literacy Aotearoa assessment, and the results from these two tests are compared for internal consistency. Quarterly reports are sent to Literacy Aotearoa, outlining how tutors are embedding literacy and numeracy support in relation to the agreed goals.

Most students are foundation learners who are not seeking qualifications. However, Ashburton Learning Centre accommodates well those who do seek qualifications. For example, in 2012-2014 three adults were referred to Ashburton Learning Centre. They all enrolled in the Open Polytechnic Business Administration and Computing level 2 course. All have now completed and achieved this qualification. Two students enrolled in the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA), and both of them staircased from the Open Wānanga Mahi Toa course. In 2011-2014, Ashburton Learning Centre had five school leavers enrolled in the Open Wānanga National Certificate in Employment/Mahi Toa. One learner who completed in 2013 has staircased to the

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

Open Polytechnic in 2014, while another two learners are working to complete the qualification. Two others failed to complete, one going to full-time work, the other becoming pregnant. In 2014 there are five students studying towards 'Get Ahead Skills' with the Open Polytechnic. These examples indicate that Ashburton Learning Centre is able to provide opportunities for students to enrol with other organisations to meet their academic needs.

Migrants from a wide range of ethnicities are assessed in initial needs interviews and placed in Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced classes of about eight students. Some get one-to-one ESOL tuition. Migrant family groups benefit as they have inter-generational feedback and support.

Learner progress and achievement is closely tracked and reported internally at staff meetings and externally to meet contract requirements. Any issues arising are dealt with promptly and appropriately. For example, to enhance communication between industry training organisations and Ashburton Learning Centre, training plan visit forms are emailed to Ashburton Learning Centre after each industry training organisation's visit to an apprentice. The form shows a breakdown of the student's progress through the apprenticeship and lists the unit standards achieved. It also provides recommendations for tutors to target specific areas. This has led to more focused goals because the industry training organisation, student and tutor all share the same information.

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**.

Ashburton Learning Centre offers a warm, welcoming, positive environment where people new to the community can meet others and discuss a wide range of issues in a non-judgmental setting. Ashburton Learning Centre is part of the close-knit community it serves. This has enabled it to access the people and resources required to consistently meet its mission statement: 'to provide accessible literacy, numeracy and critical literacy skills which enable people to actively participate in the community'.

Recording of soft skills development since 2014 has enabled Ashburton Learning Centre to show the relationship between academic achievement, self-esteem and confidence and the way academic success contributes to greater self-esteem and confidence. A good example of this was the seven Samoan women who went from the Beginner ESOL class to completing the 'Get Ahead Start' programme with Open Polytechnic funding in 2012-2013. Successful completion of this course by all the participants gave them the confidence to enrol in Ashburton Learning Centre's computing classes to gain more skills. These skills were then taken back

into the community, with one woman offering (informal) tuition to others. Ashburton Learning Centre also provided reconditioned personal computers for their use.

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**.

Ashburton Learning Centre's programmes and activities are designed to meet individual and community needs. Decisions about programmes to offer are made after requests from stakeholders and securing appropriate public or private funding. Programmes include a Te Puni Kōkiri and Literacy Aotearoa-funded programme to support provision of cultural activities (literacy/language/numeracy skills involved in raranga/weaving) and learning marae tikanga/protocol and kawa/etiquette. The outcome of this successful programme was the relocation of Te Reo services to Hakatere Marae. Te Reo classes are offered to a range of community groups including teachers, teacher aides in local pre-schools, primary schools, Ashburton College and the local district court. Computing classes, started in 2012, have grown from two to four classes per week, and also include skills training with other electronic devices, such as mobile phones and tablets.

Ashburton Learning Centre reduces barriers to learning by offering courses in the community, including evening classes. For example, ESOL tuition for migrants in a farming context was offered at a local hall. This tuition focused on relevant farming terminology and was very well received by both the participants and their employers. Workers were able to save the time and inconvenience of getting to town for this training. Employers reported good gains in fluency and understanding which increased workplace efficiency. Students consistently reported positive experiences about their learning and other resulting outcomes, such as increased confidence to participate in their community. These outcomes were verified by external stakeholders who commented on Ashburton Learning Centre's professionalism and responsiveness to community needs.

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**.

Ashburton Learning Centre staff have created a supportive and challenging teaching community in which academic and other issues are willingly shared. While accepting the challenges that many students bring, tutors work together to ensure any problems are shared and managed professionally. Students are matched carefully with tutors based on a number of factors identified during the initial needs assessment interview. For example, learners with specific learning disabilities are placed with Ashburton Learning Centre's tutors specifically trained in this area. The individual learning plans developed as a result of the initial assessment are reviewed informally each month and formally every six months or when a learner exits Ashburton Learning Centre or completes his/her course of study and at the end of each year. Ashburton Learning Centre contacts learners each month to check learner satisfaction with the course and tutor and deals immediately with any issues identified.

Ashburton Learning Centre tutors, both paid and voluntary, hold appropriate qualifications and experience in foundation learning and adult teaching. These are supplemented and strengthened by a culture of academic inquiry that is actively supported by governance and management. Regular professional development occurs both internally and externally and is an expected part of a tutor's workload and contribution to others. Staff appreciate this ongoing upskilling and reciprocate by being generous with their time and commitment to students. Tutor meetings are held weekly for paid staff and monthly for volunteer tutors. Decisions made at these meetings are tracked, actioned and signed off.

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 outcome of the 'unconditional positive regard for all' philosophy, coupled with a pragmatic advocacy approach, means that everyone matters and that a solution will be found for any problem. As a result, Ashburton Learning Centre provides exemplary wrap-around guidance and support to all students and no student is turned away. Support might include collecting a student each morning, taking them to the doctor, taking them to a job interview, or even having them live at your home. If the services Ashburton Learning Centre offers are not sufficient or appropriate, the student is referred to another service and their progress tracked. Many students present with disabilities and Ashburton Learning Centre staff use their community contacts to help them get, for example, hearing aids or specialist

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glasses. The approach taken is firm and fair, but there are consequences. For example, non-attendance is closely tracked. In 2012, three young learners were referred to Ashburton Learning Centre. Only one learner could self-fund so Ashburton Learning Centre applied for private funding for the other two learners. A local benevolent trust provided funding, an indication of community support for young learners and the effectiveness of Ashburton Learning Centre's role in the community.

Documentation developed in 2014 captures the qualitative aspects of learners' development and the relationship between academic progress and personal growth. This evidence can also be used to identify areas where extra support is required. Success is celebrated at Ashburton Learning Centre by the young adult learners' graduation and end-of-year events for learners, tutors and their families.

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**.

Governance and management at Ashburton Learning Centre is student centred and strongly focused on the PTE's mission: 'Ashburton Learning Centre is a dedicated provider of foundation learning in literacy, numeracy, and learning skills. Provision is delivered using specialist tutors with qualifications in adult literacy tuition'.

While Ashburton Learning Centre is a not-for-profit charitable trust run by an advisory committee, financial management of the organisation is tight. This includes a yearly external financial audit. There are excellent relationships between the manager who runs the day-to-day business of the centre and the governing advisory committee. The advisory committee has three sub-committees: financial, membership and personnel. The manager reports monthly to the advisory committee and the personnel committee undertakes the manager's annual performance review. There is an open-door policy for staff to attend meetings.

Ashburton Learning Centre's proactive community focus has led to successful initiatives, such as the 16-year-old school learners who attend Ashburton Learning Centre once a week for one-to-one tuition. This is augmented by support from the local college, the youth support worker at Safer Ashburton, and the Ashburton Community Alcohol and Drug Service. Ashburton Learning Centre also liaises with whānau, caregivers and Work and Income New Zealand. Another initiative is the Ministry of Education funded Young Mothers programme that arose in response to Māori families who had moved down from the North Island and were unfamiliar with the local community. Ashburton Learning Centre sourced funding to deliver to a small group of these young women in a one-off programme.

Ashburton Learning Centre has a strengths-based approach that uplifts staff and learners by focusing on positive, practical, achievable outcomes. The organisation is supported by well-defined and understood governance and management structures and high-performing governance and management personnel who work with Ashburton Learning Centre staff to undertake ongoing, systematic self-review that supports educational achievement and facilitates positive changes and improvements.

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**.

Refer 1.6.

2.2 Focus area: ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programmes

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

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

Refer 1.1-1.6.

2.3 Focus area: Literacy and numeracy programmes

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

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

Refer 1.1-1.6.

Recommendations

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

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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