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External Evaluation and Review Report

Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and
Educational Centre Trust trading as
Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and
Educational Centre

Date of report: 30 April 2019

About Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre Trust trading as Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre (TOPEC)

TOPEC was established in 2016 to advocate, promote, encourage and coordinate learning through challenge and adventure. The organisation does this through providing adventure-based learning in an outdoor environment.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	11 Hydro Road, New Plymouth
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: five (2018); one Māori, no Pasifika
Number of staff:	Six full-time equivalents; two part-time equivalents
TEO profile:	See: NZQA - Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre Trust
Last EER outcome:	NA
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TSB TOPEC Certificate in Outdoor Activities (Level 3)• New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Experiences (Level 3) (not yet delivered)
MoE number:	8091
NZQA reference:	C34062
Dates of EER visit:	7 and 8 February 2019

Summary of Results

TOPEC delivers a niche outdoor education programme which is valued by students and the wider Taranaki community. With the delivery of a newly introduced qualification, TOPEC has room to improve its self-assessment capabilities.

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| Confident in educational performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Qualification achievement rates are inconsistent for the past two years. However, the other outcomes for students offset this. |
| Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• TOPEC offers good value of outcomes for both students and stakeholders.• Teachers and instructors have relevant experience and expert knowledge.• Strong support systems are in place that are appropriate to the learning context.• There is a robust focus on health and safety responsibilities.• TOPEC has developed some processes to help ensure student success.• Formalisation of feedback could be improved to develop stronger self-assessment practice.• TOPEC has gaps in data analysis and record-keeping due to staff changes during a period of transition. |

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?	
Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Achievement rates ranged between 44 per cent and 80 per cent between 2016 and 2018. Performance is variable. Although there are low student numbers on the programme, there has been an improvement in achievement rates.</p> <p>Because of the small number of students, TOPEC is aware of the reasons for non-completions, which are often beyond the organisation's control. However, TOPEC's governing board would benefit from being better informed about student achievement.</p> <p>Students who leave school consequently have to leave the TOPEC programme. Students who do complete attend and achieve well. TOPEC expects better results for students enrolled on the New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Experiences in 2019 as the programme is better suited to learner needs.</p> <p>TOPEC tracks learner achievement using various tools for ongoing evidence gathering, including student logbooks for practical skills and photos.</p> <p>TOPEC recently worked with local schools to improve their pre-enrolment processes by identifying clearer criteria to encourage better candidate suitability.</p>
Conclusion:	Student achievement is variable. TOPEC has identified reasons for non-completions and has strengthened pre-enrolment processes.

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 students?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TOPEC's students enhance their well-being and develop life skills in teamwork, leadership and confidence. This was supported by a number of stakeholders including graduates, parents and teachers.</p> <p>Various stakeholders support and promote TOPEC's commitment of improving young lives through adventure education. TOPEC offers an opportunity to students who may not otherwise have access to outdoor education. Stakeholders – including parents of graduates, local principals, teachers and community groups – speak highly of TOPEC and see the training as a valuable part of the wider Taranaki community.</p> <p>TOPEC staff remain engaged with graduates and know where their graduates go. However, this is informal knowledge and TOPEC does not have formalised documentation around destination data or the value of outcomes.</p> <p>There is currently no benchmarking taking place against achievement or outcomes; this would be beneficial going forward.</p>
Conclusion:	TOPEC has strong relationships with stakeholders and creates valuable outcomes for students. Self-assessment practice needs to be strengthened to reflect the strength of these relationships and outcomes.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TOPEC cultivates good relationships with local high schools to develop and deliver outdoor education.</p> <p>TOPEC is actively engaged with the local educational community in the Taranaki region and consulted with community stakeholders in the development of the New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Experiences. TOPEC incorporates local cultural knowledge and Te Reo into its curricula.</p> <p>TOPEC's teachers are an asset to the centre, with relevant teaching and curriculum design and pedagogical qualifications. Development of the New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Experiences provided an opportunity to review programme design and the needs of stakeholders and students.</p> <p>The new certificate has moved to a more holistic approach to the curriculum and lesson planning in response to the teaching philosophies of staff aimed at increasing learner participation and success. TOPEC uses Skills Active (industry training organisation) assessment material and is consistent in moderation practice. However, TOPEC needs to strengthen its internal moderation processes by ensuring completeness of the process.</p> <p>Other changes to the new programme include flexibility in how the credits are formed, with the introduction of a five-credit option as an alternative to kayaking after identifying that some non-completions were based on a fear of water.</p> <p>TOPEC offers flexible scheduling for schools – three days at school and two days at the PTE. Management works with schools to plan and deliver the timetable and assessment schedule.</p>
Conclusion:	Design of the new programme is innovative and caters to the needs of students. Data analysis and internal moderation processes could be improved.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students are provided with comprehensive information prior to enrolment to enable them to make informed decisions before committing to the programme. The director conducts pre-enrolment interviews to discuss learning goals and to ensure extensive support is provided, depending on the students' identified needs. Students who identify academic learning difficulties receive additional academic support.</p> <p>TOPEC lends equipment to students who do not come with their own, to remove any barriers of learning. In addition to student support, the outdoor teaching and learning environment is seen as inclusive by students. Rather than focussing on physical capabilities, the new programme focuses on the development of teamwork and leadership skills.</p> <p>Graduates of the TSB TOPEC Certificate in Outdoor Activities emphasised the support and knowledge of the instructors and the benefit of learning outdoors. The low teacher-to-student ratio also supports achievement and student development.</p> <p>TOPEC's focus on health and safety procedures informs student progress and feedback through corrective action.</p>
Conclusion:	Students are supported well in both the classroom and outdoor learning contexts by expert and caring staff.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TOPEC promotes its vision to students and the wider community through its commitment to provide outdoor experiences to young people to enhance their lives and skill development.</p> <p>At the time of the evaluation, TOPEC had appointed a new director who is open and responsive to new ideas and implementing change. The quality assurance manager remains, with increased hours to support management of the recently established PTE. Instructors are appropriately experienced and qualified, are well supported by management, and feel valued. Management conducts performance appraisals for staff which are linked to their professional development needs.</p> <p>Because of the small size of the organisation, governance and management seek advice from relevant sources as needed. Management cultivates an ongoing focus on health and safety throughout the organisation. Toolbox meetings held every morning identify and assess any health and safety risks and give staff the opportunity to discuss the plan for the day, including weather and equipment checks and student safety in outdoor activities.</p> <p>Data analysis is used effectively for health and safety processes, but could be improved in other areas (see 1.1 and 1.3). TOPEC takes a clear investigative approach to understanding the causes of various incidents and near misses. For example, instructors identified a rapid on a river which continued to turn over a raft during activity. They subsequently changed the route which resulted in reduced incident reports for this activity.</p> <p>Various mechanisms supported by management contribute to quality planning and learning. For example, the director visits instructors in the field to ensure consistency and robustness in assessing health and safety.</p> <p>With only small student numbers, the organisation will need to be more innovative in promoting the offerings of TOPEC to ensure continued growth and sustainability.</p>

Conclusion:	Governance and management of TOPEC are effectively supporting educational achievement by committed staff who are adaptive and responsive to the vision of TOPEC.
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1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TOPEC is effective in managing its compliance responsibilities and maintains a strong focus on health and safety. Processes and self-assessment in health and safety practice are robust as a result.</p> <p>Staff at TOPEC are aware of health and safety regulations and changes to safety requirements. Equipment meets safety requirements and is regularly checked and upgraded. For example, Maritime New Zealand conducts safety and technical audits on rafting equipment.</p> <p>TOPEC is compliant with the overall delivery of approved learning hours and effectively manages other NZQA rules and responsibilities. Instructors are appropriately qualified and do not teach until they are fully inducted and assessed as competent. All teachers and instructors hold up-to-date first aid certificates. Memoranda of understanding are maintained between schools and TOPEC.</p> <p>Policies ensure a clear investigative process into the causes of various incidents and near misses.</p>
Conclusion:	TOPEC has effective management processes and responds to the health and safety compliance requirements of NZQA, Skills Active and other agencies.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: TSB TOPEC Certificate in Outdoor Activities (Level 3)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good

2.2 Focus area: New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Experiences (Level 3)

Performance:	NA
Self-assessment:	NA
Note	At the time of the evaluation visit, this programme had not yet been offered. However, discussions were held with staff in terms of the level of preparedness for the new programme, as evidenced in the body of this report.

Recommendations

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

NZQA recommends that Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre Trust:

- Formalise methods of collecting information to maintain record-keeping, e.g. destination data.
- Develop a more comprehensive programme review process.
- Improve awareness of student achievement within the governance structure.
- Given the nature of the training, consider setting up a small advisory group.
- Improve record-keeping around internal moderation – particularly for pre-assessment moderation – to ensure that any actions required are carried out and instructors are fully informed of any changes made.
- Look at ways to benchmark achievement and practice against similar national providers.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

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

Appendix

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational 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.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016. The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

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

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz). The Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016 are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/ga-rules/external-evaluation-rules-2016/1/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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