



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report

Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and
Educational Centre Trust

Date of report: 11 July 2025

About Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre Trust

The Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre (TOPEC) is a registered charity established by Taranaki secondary schools in collaboration with local service groups. It delivers environmental and outdoor education and leadership training.

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| Type of organisation: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| Location: | 11 Hydro Road, New Plymouth |
| Eligible to enrol international students: | No |
| Number of students: | Domestic: 95 students in 2024; 22 per cent Māori, 3 per cent Pasifika, the remainder Pākehā; 93 per cent of students are under 25 years of age International: nil |
| Number of staff: | Two full-time, four part-time; 4.3 full-time equivalents |
| TEO profile: | See TOPEC on the NZQA website TOPEC provides a broad range of programmes and activities spanning primary, secondary and tertiary/adult education. This external evaluation and review (EER) focuses primarily on the adult education component of TOPEC's educational delivery. |
| Last EER outcome: | The 2021 EER of TOPEC resulted in summative judgements of Highly Confident in both educational performance and capability in self-assessment. |
| Scope of evaluation: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pest Eradication and Bush Survival (Level 3) (Micro-credential) ref: 126082-3• New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Leadership (Level 4) Ref: 125736-2 |
| MoE number: | 8091 |

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| NZQA reference: | C61418 |
| Dates of EER visit: | 29 and 30 May 2025 |

Summary of results

TOPEC delivers high-quality education and training that leads to positive outcomes for students, schools and the wider community. The PTE's programmes are well regarded for being responsive to both partner organisations and individual student needs. Strong planning, monitoring and review processes ensure the ongoing quality and relevance of TOPEC's provision.

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| Highly Confident in educational performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are gaining valuable, transferable skills and achieving well, supported by effective teaching and robust analysis of progress over time. School partnership students are gaining credits towards NCEA.¹ Micro-credential students are gaining qualifications and endorsements, important to their future employment or study.• TOPEC is using its professional networks and community relationships effectively to design and deliver programmes to meet the needs of students, local schools, the community and industry. Ongoing engagement with external partners ensures provision remains relevant and trusted. |
| Highly Confident in capability in self- assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are highly engaged, well supported, and benefit from an organisation-wide shared commitment to their success. Qualified staff use their significant outdoor, educational and community experience to ensure the education is relevant and engaging.• Self-assessment is systematic and responsive, with ongoing informal and formal review processes that lead to meaningful change.• The organisation is well resourced and responsibly managed, with strong academic leadership. TOPEC consistently meets its key compliance obligations.• NZQA is highly confident that TOPEC will continue to use the insights gained through its self-assessment processes to drive meaningful and sustained improvement. |

¹ National Certificate in Educational Achievement.

Key evaluation question findings²

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>TOPEC programmes consistently demonstrate high achievement, with student success rates exceeding 85 per cent. Progress is carefully monitored through detailed analysis, ensuring clear tracking of learning outcomes.</p> <p>Students acquire a range of valuable and transferable skills, including NZOIA³ awards, first aid and increased self-confidence, which enhance their employability and ability to apply their skills in real workplace settings.</p> <p>Māori and Pasifika students perform at levels comparable to their peers. All students are supported by ongoing, detailed and timely feedback that helps maintain student engagement and achievement.</p> <p>TOPEC plays a vital role in keeping many school students engaged in education, with programmes contributing to NCEA achievement and raising aspirations by helping students develop confidence.</p> <p>Assessment processes are robust, with both internal and external moderation validating results. Staff engage in frequent reflective discussions, including toolbox meetings and debriefs, to continually enhance teaching practices and student learning.</p> |
| Conclusion: | TOPEC students are achieving well and gaining good value across the programmes the PTE delivers. Achievement data is regularly monitored and analysed to identify, and act on, areas of potential improvement. TOPEC is strongly student focussed and committed to ensuring that students, |

² The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

³ New Zealand Outdoor Instructors Association.

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| | partner schools and employers receive value from the programmes and services delivered. |
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1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Learning activities are carefully planned and are focused on achieving clear graduate outcomes, with courses structured to align with both student and industry requirements.</p> <p>TOPEC delivers field-based industry training – such as pest eradication – ensuring students gain practical, real-world skills relevant to potential employment.</p> <p>Courses undergo regular review and updating through an exemplary annual programme review process, demonstrating reflective practice and responsiveness to changing needs.</p> <p>All teaching staff are appropriately qualified as teachers and/or instructors, with a strong pedagogical focus that bridges secondary and tertiary education, ensuring a well-rounded, student-centred learning experience.</p> <p>Staff engage in regular peer and management observations of teaching, toolbox meetings and reflective discussions, which lead to continuous improvements in teaching and learning.</p> <p>Strong stakeholder engagement – including thorough student surveys and robust internal and external moderation – ensures programmes remain relevant, high quality and well matched to the evolving needs of students and the community.</p> |
| Conclusion: | TOPEC's programme design and delivery are well structured, student-centred and clearly focused on graduate outcomes. Regular course reviews, strong moderation systems and responsive teaching practices ensure programmes remain relevant to student and stakeholder needs. |

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

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Students at TOPEC are engaged and well supported through small class sizes, one-to-one assistance where needed, and strong peer-based teamwork that fosters both academic and social success.</p> <p>Learning support is tailored to individual and group needs, with early identification of student goals through interviews, open days and pre-study communication, ensuring the right fit between student and programme.</p> <p>Students receive timely, useful feedback and have regular progress reviews, helping them to stay on track and achieve outcomes that are relevant to their personal and professional goals.</p> <p>A strong focus on inclusion is evident through an effective disability action plan and thoughtful strategies to support neurodiverse students. Student feedback about both the organisation and teaching is overwhelmingly positive. Staff are described as approachable, responsive and genuinely invested in their students.</p> <p>Behavioural expectations and support structures are clear from the outset, with group contracts co-developed to guide cohort dynamics and reinforce a safe, respectful learning environment. A developing sense of cultural competency among staff is contributing to an inclusive environment where all students feel respected and supported.</p> <p>The natural campus environment is well utilised to enhance learning, while well-managed health and safety systems ensure a secure setting for all students.</p> |
| Conclusion: | TOPEC provides strong, individualised support that keeps students engaged and helps them succeed. Small class sizes, regular feedback and tailored academic and pastoral support ensure students' needs and aspirations are well understood and met. |

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

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>TOPEC is led by a skilled and experienced leadership team with strong academic and outdoor education expertise, supported by a governance board that understands its role and has strengthened its capability through a recent self-review and refreshed membership.</p> <p>The organisation has a clear purpose and a sustainable business model, underpinned by sound financial management, growing sponsorship partnerships, and a firm commitment to legal and ethical responsibilities.</p> <p>Governance and management systems are focused on educational achievement, with excellent academic leadership, effective support services, and a demonstrable educational ethos embedded throughout the organisation.</p> <p>Staff are highly valued and well supported through regular, planned professional development – including credentials like assessment unit standard 4098 and NZOIA instructor awards – all funded by TOPEC, and reinforced through formal performance reviews aligned to organisational goals.</p> <p>Quality assurance and self-assessment are strong, systematic and fully embedded, with data analysis used meaningfully to evaluate performance and guide improvements across all areas.</p> <p>TOPEC maintains open, transparent communication. The director works both in and on the business, ensuring ongoing dialogue with staff, students and partner organisations.</p> <p>The organisation is highly responsive to the needs of its school communities and is committed to building enduring, authentic relationships to support the aspirations of mana whenua.</p> |
| Conclusion: | TOPEC's governance and management are highly effective in supporting educational achievement through clear leadership, strong governance and a sustainable, well-managed business model. |

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>TOPEC demonstrates a strong compliance culture, treating regulatory requirements seriously and embedding them into day-to-day operations through structured systems and a compliance calendar.</p> <p>All NZQA programme requirements are current, and unit standard reporting is consistently 100 per cent on time. Partner schools complimented the accuracy and efficiency of TOPEC's handling of assessment and credit evidence.</p> <p>TOPEC is meeting the requirements of the Code of Practice⁴, demonstrated by the submission of an attestation to NZQA indicating completion of a self-review within required timeframes. The self-review is publicly available on the PTE's website.</p> <p>The organisation actively participates in internal and external moderation, ensuring assessment validity and alignment with national standards.</p> <p>Health and safety systems are robust, meeting regulatory standards and supported by AdventureMark accreditation, which includes both annual and three-yearly audits.</p> <p>All staff and senior students undergo regular police vetting, supporting a safe and compliant learning environment.</p> <p>TOPEC has implemented the recommendations from the previous EER, reflecting a proactive and responsive approach to compliance.</p> <p>A regularly reviewed safety management system integrates standard operating procedures with a quality management system, reinforcing the alignment between compliance and educational quality.</p> |
| Conclusion: | TOPEC manages its compliance accountabilities effectively through a well-embedded culture of compliance and a strong, systematic approach. |

⁴ [The Education \(Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners\) Code of Practice 2021](#)

Focus areas

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

2.1 Pest Eradication and Bush Survival (Level 3) (Micro-credential) Ref: 126082-3

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |

2.2 New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Leadership (Level 4) Ref: 125736-2

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |

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.

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

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 1⁵

Table 1. Student enrolments and completions 2021-24

| Qualification | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | | 2024 | |
|---|------------|------|------------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | SE | C % | SE | C % | SE | C % | SE | C % |
| Leadership | 47 | 95.7 | 29 | 100 | 17 | 100 | 35 | 97.4 |
| Leadership Facilitation | 9 | 100 | 6 | 100 | - | - | - | - |
| Pest Eradication and Bush Survival | 38 | 94.7 | 48 | 83.3 | 32 | 87.5 | 36 | 100 |
| NZCOE (Level 3) | 14 | 100 | 15 | 86.6 | 10 | 100 | 13 | 100 |
| NZCOL (Level 4) | 13 | 69.2 | 8 | 80% | 14 | 86.2 | 11 | 90 |
| Total Enrolments / Average Completion Rate % | 125 / 90.4 | | 114 / 81.7 | | 73 / 90 | | 95 / 95 | |
| SE = student enrolments C % = completions percentage | | | | | | | | |

⁵ Data supplied by TOPEC.

Appendix 2

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 fraud⁶*
- *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.*

⁶ 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 under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

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, and*
- maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs excluding universities, and*
- maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, micro-credentials and consents to assess and 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 2022. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, 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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