

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Active Institute Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 15 December 2011

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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

Location:	23 Norman Spencer Drive, Manukau City
Type:	Private training establishment and limited liability company
First registered:	1998
Number of students:	Domestic: 79 equivalent full-time students International: none
Number of staff:	Nine full-time equivalents and three part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing (Level 2)</li><li>• National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing (Level 3)</li><li>• National Certificate in Computing (Level 2)</li><li>• National Certificate in Computing (Level 3)</li></ul>
Sites:	One site in Manukau City
Distinctive characteristics:	Active Institute has up to 26 nationalities studying at the institute, with a large proportion being Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants.
Recent significant changes:	In 2011, funding for Active Institute changed. Active Institute now receives Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding for Foundation Focused Training Opportunities (FFTO) courses and Ministry of Social Development (MSD) funding for Training for Work (TFW) courses. Learners are now identified as "clients" and those considered

“medium-risk” by MSD are referred by WINZ to Active Institute.  
This has required a change in role for a number of staff and the PTE.

Previous quality assurance history:

Active Institute is meeting national external moderation requirements.

The previous quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in 2008, reported that Active Institute met all but two requirements.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Following a review of documentation provided and a scoping visit held between Active Institute’s director and computer tutor and the NZQA lead evaluator, the following focus areas were identified for inclusion in the external evaluation and review:

- Literacy, numeracy and language studies (ESOL) courses

This 24-week course aims to assist clients into employment or further higher education and training. This course, plus the level 2 computing certificate, receive FFTO funding for 39 places and accounts for the largest group of clients attending Active Institute.

- Employment coaching and placement courses

This 13-week course, with continuous intakes, has 40 MSD-funded places. The aim of the course is to assist clients into employment.

In accordance with NZQA policy, the EER scope included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

### 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 evaluation team consisted of two evaluators, and the external evaluation and review was conducted at the Manukau site over two days. The evaluation team spoke with the director, tutors, coaches, administration staff, and the majority of students on site. Stakeholders were interviewed on the phone.

Supporting documents reviewed during the visit included achievement data, reports to funding agencies, and student exit interviews. The evaluation team also viewed the institute's staff and student intranet.

Active Institute has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Active Institute Limited**.

Previous student achievements and outcomes have met or exceeded TEC requirements for every course delivered by Active Institute consistently for the past two years and before. Currently, interim results for 2011 indicate that the institute is on track to achieve or exceed the varied and specific required outcomes of both the TEC and MSD. This is a very good result considering the comprehensive changes required to course delivery, tutors' primary role and function, and the change in the client group the staff now work with to meet the outcomes of the programmes commenced this year. Although the interim results are promising, the data is not yet sufficient to justify high confidence in the educational performance of the institute.

Valuable skills are acquired and the increase in confidence and motivation of clients assists them towards the goal of gaining employment and financial independence. The sense of community, the opportunity for clients to learn from each other, and witnessing others' success is a regular source of encouragement.

Leadership of the PTE in this period of transition has been effective. Internal processes have been developed; staff have been retained and are enthusiastic and positive about their role, delivery, and the success they are experiencing with clients.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Active Institute Limited**.

Overall, self-assessment at Active Institute is purposeful and genuine. All staff are involved and there are effective systems and processes to collect useful data which is analysed and discussed. Actions that follow from self-assessment have led to several worthwhile improvements.

In this year of transition, self-assessment has been effective in assisting Active Institute to identify a number of areas for possible improvement and has led to a greater awareness of possible issues the PTE has needed to consider.

Most feedback from clients about their experience at the institute relies on face-to-face feedback to tutors and coaches. Providing further opportunities for students to provide feedback specifically about areas of value and teaching would improve the validity of the current feedback gathered.

## TEO response

Active Institute has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

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

Active Institute has sustained and exceeded previous TEC-required outcomes over a number of years. The table below summarises the past two years outcomes.

Outcome	Required outcome	2009	2010
Occupancy	100%	104%	102%
Positive outcomes (student moves to employment or higher level of study)	60%	73%	77%
Average credit per learner	20 credits	35 credits	31 credits

These good outcomes have been confirmed by the TEC's increasing the number of funded places at the institute over the last three years.

Active Institute has carefully tracked the 2011 achievement data of its clients. Indications to date for the FFTO courses are that outcomes are tracking close to or exceeding requirements. These outcomes include: course completion, progression into employment, progression into further training, unit standard achievement, and improvement in literacy and numeracy skills.

The other significant course, employment coaching and placement, requires quarterly reporting to MSD. Indications via quarterly reports for the first two quarters and the draft report for the third quarter for 2011 are that Active Institute is already meeting this funder's outcome requirement of medium-risk clients being employed by the end of the 13-week course. To date, 60 clients have been supported into employment, and all bar one have remained in employment for a minimum of 91 days.

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



These results are very good for two reasons. First, at the time of the EER there were still two months of the courses to run and a further two months once the course was completed, to continue to work with clients to gain employment. Secondly, there has been a change in the client group to which Active Institute and staff deliver training. Previously, students were predominantly young immigrants and refugees integrating into the community. The current clients are mostly mature and most have very basic levels of English literacy skills.

All staff are well informed of required and actual outcomes which are discussed on a regular basis informally and formally at a weekly meeting with the director and at monthly staff meetings, where achievement and outcomes are specifically reviewed and actions agreed to improve.

The longer-term outcomes of this success are unclear. The extent to which any sustainable outcomes for these medium-risk clients can be attributed to the TEO's activity – particularly for the Training for Work course – will become clearer with further evaluation. Once this programme has spread to other providers, the institute could compare results as part of improving self-assessment.

## 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 **Good**.

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

The sense of community at Active Institute is valued by staff and clients. People who face similar issues, who have varied life experiences, and who come from many nationalities appreciate the opportunity to learn from each other. Students talked about being inspired and encouraged by the success of other students who they saw regularly moving into work or going for interviews. Active Institute ensures that its clients are aware of every success.

The clients, tutors, and stakeholders confirm that these experiences improve the well-being of clients at Active Institute and enhance their abilities. The evaluators heard examples of where clients achieve an increase in confidence and motivation, assisting them to progress towards financial independence.

There is evidence that clients acquire useful skills and knowledge that assist in meeting outcomes. Examples of skills acquired include creating a curriculum vitae and a covering letter that attracts prospective employers, and awareness and practise of interview skills through role-play. Those clients who gain the National Certificate in Computing qualification are able (if approved by the WINZ case manager) to progress to other local PTEs or a polytechnic and continue to study to a higher level. There is evidence from the past two years that previous Active Institute graduates have taken up this option. The local polytechnic verified that

learners from the institute are motivated, prepared to study at the next level, and regarded with favour when applying to enrol.

The value of the current courses offered is still being evaluated as clients do not have a choice about participating in the course or the provider they engage with. The real value of attending the institute daily and having to participate in courses may not be fully or immediately evident to clients. There is also secondary evidence that there is value in the courses run by Active Institute. For example, some former clients now in employment continue to have a relationship with the PTE and utilise their new position to support the work of the institute by informing the coaches and tutors when vacancies arise in their new workplace. Further evaluation of this area would assist in validating Active Institute's perspective on what is valuable for clients in both the immediate and long terms.

### 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**.

Stakeholders are clearly identified by Active Institute, and it is apparent that effective engagement occurs at all levels of the organisation. Tutors, employment coaches, and administration staff visit WINZ offices at least fortnightly. This is primarily to introduce the institute to prospective clients, but it also provides an opportunity to have regular meetings with WINZ staff. Discussions include challenges and changes being experienced in the new course. Active Institute believes it has contributed to better processes and also to the funders' understanding of how these new ventures are working.

Active Institute has a robust selection process prior to accepting a client onto its courses. The initial needs analysis is useful, in that information gathered in this process is used to provide feedback to WINZ and allows the client and Active Institute to gauge whether or not to proceed with the training. This is significant for those clients on the FFTO courses as they have only one opportunity to attend training at no cost to them.

The employment coaching course is new, and throughout this year the design and content of the course has changed to reflect the learning from self-assessment. The current form of the course has a good balance of active job searching and training. There is one-to-one time with coaches daily, active job searching, and structured training sessions, where the topic changes frequently and is decided according to both the ongoing needs analysis of the individual client and the combined needs of clients. For example, it is recognised that clients may have low levels of motivation and self-confidence. The institute attempts to improve these by identifying clients' strengths and providing training in communication skills.

In the courses, and in all aspects of the clients' involvement with the institute, clients are encouraged to place issues or opportunities that arise into the context of a possible workplace scenario, and are encouraged to manage the situation. For example, having Muslim men and Christian women working together in class enables clients to develop ways of coping with multicultural expectations.

Good communication and the combination of informal daily self-assessment (between clients and staff and between staff and staff) and formal weekly and monthly self-assessment (by the director and course staff) encourages a process where the individual needs of clients are identified, discussed, and responded to quickly.

#### 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

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

All tutors and coaches are well qualified and have life experiences they identify as enhancing their ability to engage with and teach clients effectively. This year has heralded a significant change in the role and title of most tutors. Previously, the primary focus was on delivering training and education, achieving credits and qualifications, and developing pathways to further study. This year, new skills are being developed to enable staff to become effective work brokers. All staff acknowledged the challenges in this role change; however, the coaches and tutors the evaluators spoke with were enthusiastic and positive about their clients, their new role, and their contribution to the clients' successes experienced to date.

The skills of each tutor and coach are acknowledged. Staff do not remain anchored to their specific course or topic but are able to deliver in the area of their strengths to clients in any course or to clients on an individual basis where required.

Clients and tutors relate effectively to each other; one-to-one time is given to every client every day, and clients confirmed that they receive good information. Course appraisal forms describe staff as helpful and friendly.

The learning environment is good. There is a computer lab where all clients have access to a computer each, and computer support is readily available. The newly developed intranet contains all resources and materials that relate to courses. Clients are able to print these resources at no cost or can transfer them to a memory stick to take home and view on their own computer.

National external moderation of the National Certificate in Computing course has occurred and assessments have been deemed as assessing to the national standard. The assessor decisions have all been upheld. Progress of clients through assessment occurs reliably on all courses. In addition to the TEC-required assessment of client literacy and numeracy skills in the FFTO course, there is also

regular internal assessment of English skills. The ESOL tutors discuss individuals and transfer clients between classes as a result of these assessments.

Self-assessment of the effectiveness of the teaching could be more robust. A peer observation process occurs annually. However, Active Institute has a small, cohesive teaching team, and internal review may not be entirely objective or offer insights to further develop the skills of tutors and coaches.

### 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

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

Led by the director, the staff at Active Institute provide a genuine, caring environment for clients. The skills and life experiences of tutors and employment coaches are encouraged and utilised. Staff identify possible barriers to employment and improve the well-being of clients. The evaluators heard of examples where staff had identified and responded to health or social issues above and beyond contracted requirements. An illustration of this was that, through the observation of a client's learning and review of the client's progress, tutors detected some anomalies and organised and transported the client to visit a free health clinic where diagnosis and later specialist treatment occurred which has led to a significant change in all aspects of the client's life for the better.

The director supports and expects all staff to have a holistic view when engaging with clients, hence a number of activities and services that Active Institute is not funded for are provided to clients. Examples include providing transport or funds to pay for petrol to attend interviews (Active Institute has recently purchased a company car for this purpose), assisting clients with shopping to buy clothes for interviews, navigating processes with WINZ clients relating to gaining employment, and utilising community agencies such as Dress for Success.

Good information on expectations, required behaviours, available support, and outcomes for all courses are made overt for clients. This commences at the WINZ office prior to attending Active Institute, and continues during the five-day trial and throughout the course. There is a one-to-one meeting every morning between client and coach to review progress, any problems are identified, and tutors respond, utilising other Active Institute staff for advice or support as required.

Almost all the feedback about aspects of the client's experience relies on the client giving feedback face to face to tutors and coaches. Providing further opportunities for students to provide feedback specifically about the guidance and support they receive or would like to receive, would improve the validity of the current feedback gathered.

## 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 **Good**.

There is clear, effective leadership around the purpose and direction of Active Institute. The philosophy of “providing good service” is an expectation that all staff understand.

All staff are required and supported to engage in the institute and with clients beyond their respective roles of teaching a subject or class and are required to have a broad view of participation in the activities of this small PTE. For example, the director is able and prepared to step in and teach when tutors or coaches are required to be off site assisting clients. He is also available to attend to any number of tasks that might require attention in the daily running of the institute. This good communication and general willingness provides effective leadership.

There is evidence that the director responds in a timely way to requests from staff for resources that support educational outcomes. Early in 2011, employment coaches identified that it would be useful for all clients to have access to a computer each. The request and rationale was presented and ten new computers were purchased. All requests for resources by tutors and coaches have been approved and purchased. This targeted resourcing enables the institute to achieve outcomes for clients.

Despite the PTE and staff still undergoing rapid changes associated with the transition in the function of the PTE and the systems to manage new contract requirements and individual roles, staff have been retained and continue to feel valued and supported. Most are long-serving. All staff interviewed are enthusiastic about their role, the clients, and the PTE. Staff professional development is actively encouraged and funded by Active Institute. The evaluators heard of several examples of tutors and coaches very recently engaging in further study relevant to their role. All were fully funded. Staff are clearly valued and are committed and effective.

Opportunities for the director and staff to engage and converse formally and informally are frequent. Formal meetings have specific purposes and are minuted. Staff meetings, held monthly, include staff receiving high quality data and information about updated outcomes, which are discussed, followed by actions leading to worthwhile improvements. This sharing of information enhances leadership and achievement.

## 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 **Good**.

### 2.2 Focus area: Literacy, numeracy and language studies (ESOL) courses

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

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

### 2.3 Focus area: Employment coaching and placement course

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

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

# Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those implied or expressed within the report.

# Appendix

## Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.*

*In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.*

*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)).*

*Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication *Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review*, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eeer/introduction/>*

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