



Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Zealand Language Centres
Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 16 November 2010

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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:	Auckland
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1984
Number of students:	International: 300 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)
Number of staff:	49 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	General English which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Core General English (internally assessed)• Preparation for the Cambridge First Certificate, Advanced and Proficiency examinations (externally assessed)• Preparation for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) examinations (externally assessed). The Wellington centre is a registered open TOEIC Test Centre.• Preparation for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (Academic Module) examination (externally assessed).

Teaching training including:

- Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) (for non-native speakers)
- Teaching English to Child Speakers of other Languages (TECSOL) (for non-native speakers).

The Auckland centre also offers the Cambridge CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English To Speakers of Other Languages) (for native speakers).

Sites:

Level 6, 21 Federal St, Auckland

Level 7, DTZ House, 76 Cashel St, Christchurch

Level 2, 101-103 Courtenay Pl, Wellington

Distinctive characteristics:

New Zealand Language Centres (NZLC) is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

NZLC's student body is drawn from a wide range of cultures including Korean, European, Pacific Island, South American, Japanese, Chinese.

The organisation offers students a City Link experience which allows students, enrolled for 12 weeks or longer, to study between the different campuses. An airline ticket between the cities is provided free.

The Christchurch centre was undamaged by the earthquake of 4 September 2010.

Recent significant changes:

In February 2010, GEOS Corporation of Japan ceased ownership of the three language centres. On 1 March 2010 the company was purchased by the principal of the Christchurch Language Centre. Initial focus for the company has been on re-establishing relationships with key stakeholders and rebranding to the new name, New Zealand Language Centres Ltd (NZLC). NZLC comprises the three campuses: Auckland Language Centre, Wellington Language Centre, and Christchurch Language Centre.

Previous quality assurance history:

At the last quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit carried out in 2008, GEOS NZ did not meet five requirements of Quality Assurance Standard One, the quality standard then in force. The requirements not met related to the quality management system (QMS), personnel, and physical and learning resources. Not all matters relating to the previous audit had been resolved. The organisation met all the requirements of the Code of Practice.

Other:

NA

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

To gain an understanding of the organisation it was decided to focus on the two programmes currently running for General English.

The mandatory focus areas are:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support (including internationals).

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 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 external evaluation and review team spent three days on site at the New Zealand Language Centres' sites in Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland. During the visit the team met with key staff, including the principals, directors of studies, student support staff, students, senior teachers, and teachers. While on site, the evaluation team viewed key documents, for example student survey summary data, achievement results, and the English New Zealand audit report.

New Zealand Language Centres Limited has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received were 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 **New Zealand Language Centres Limited**.

Students who study with NZLC have a range of achievement aspirations, and the organisation works hard to support students to reach their goals. Explicit learning outcomes mean students are very clear about what they have achieved and what they need to do in order to make progress. Students who participate actively in the learning programme advance one level approximately every ten weeks. Students value their time with NZLC and improvements in English language capabilities are clearly evident. These improvements increase students' future career prospects in their home countries, and sometimes in New Zealand.

A wide range of levels is available for students, who are offered internally assessed general English and externally assessed academic English programmes of study. Teacher training programmes are a popular choice with some groups. The student satisfaction surveys support what the evaluation team heard; students are well satisfied with their achievements and experiences at NZLC.

The change of ownership has been managed carefully, and the continuity of staff and processes gives the evaluation team confidence that the organisation will move ahead effectively and successfully implement quality planning processes. However, key management processes are still being developed, therefore the evaluation team was unable to settle on a rating of highly confident.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **New Zealand Language Centres Limited**.

Achievement is being closely monitored at the individual student level; however, a broad analysis of achievement and rates of progress is not currently being done. The systematic collection of testimonials from students who have had a positive experience strengthens NZLC's understanding about the value that it adds to the students' learning experience. However, more could be done to gain a more comprehensive picture of outcomes for learners.

Close monitoring of referrals and regular communication with key local agents gives the organisation confidence that it is matching the needs of key stakeholders. Regular student surveys are collated and analysed and there is good evidence that issues which arise are dealt with effectively.

TEO response

New Zealand Language Centres Limited has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Findings¹

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**.

Students who study with NZLC have a range of achievement aspirations, and the organisation works hard to support students to reach these goals. The students' most generic goal is to improve their English, and the organisation monitors rates of progress regularly. The core competencies of the English language are assessed on entry, at week 4, and then again at week 9. These assessments ensure that students are very clear about what they have achieved and what they need to do to make progress. Students who participate actively in the learning programme advance a level approximately every ten weeks.

It is clear that students are improving their English language skills. Students progress through the different levels of English and many gain positive achievement results in the externally assessed TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS, and Cambridge exams. The evaluation team also heard from a number of students who attested to making great strides with their speaking and listening.

Achievement is being closely monitored at an individual level, with formative and summative assessments feeding into progress reports. Learning outcomes are aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and standards of achievement are clear. A broad analysis of achievement and rates of progress, across the different campuses, levels, and perhaps ethnicity, could provide the organisation with useful data to benchmark the progress of students.

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 **Adequate**.

Students value their time with NZLC and believe they have improved their abilities in English. Some students see the improvements in English as increasing their future career prospects in their home countries. Those who choose to work towards an external exam see the benefits of gaining entry into higher-level programmes at other New Zealand or international tertiary institutes.

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

The evaluation team heard from students who saw their time at NZLC as being valuable for the overseas experience and friendships they had made. The broad range of nationalities that enrol in NZLC and the City Link scheme foster this social experience.

The organisation could do more to understand the value of what it delivers to students. The student exit survey does not get a good response and does not ask students about what they have most valued from their time with NZLC. However, the systematic collection of testimonials strengthens the organisation's understanding from information supplied by students who have had a positive experience.

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 **Good**.

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

The range of programmes offered by NZLC ensures that students are able to develop their English at a level that best meets their needs. Students can choose one of the externally assessed academic programmes or the internally assessed core general English courses, or perhaps a sequential combination of the two. The TESOL course has recently been extended to all three campuses.

Students' needs are assessed on entry, with each student taking a placement test and participating in an interview where their goals are discussed. The most appropriate pathway is planned, although flexibility is built into the programme to allow for a change in direction. There was good evidence that new courses are being developed in response to learner feedback and analysis of achievement results.

The resources available to the teaching team are good, with two core texts forming the basis of delivery. Texts are alternated to ensure students do not have to repeat content. Teaching staff supplement the texts with their own resources to ensure content is relevant, varied, and topical. A lack of technology in the classrooms was noted by the evaluation team, although its absence was not a significant issue for staff or students.

The organisation is currently finding it difficult to match the needs of one ethnic group, because they arrive at the organisation with stronger speaking and listening skills than reading and writing. Currently, the programmes are not structured to deal with this variation and this is resulting in frustration for some.

Constant close monitoring of the international students arriving in New Zealand, and referrals from key local agents, gives the organisation confidence that it is matching the needs of these key stakeholders. Regular student surveys are collated and analysed and there is good evidence that issues which arise are dealt with effectively. The surveys generally support what the evaluation team heard; students are well satisfied with their experience at NZLC.

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 **Excellent**.

Teaching is professional. Most tutors have been with the organisation for a long time and are highly experienced, well qualified, and committed to their work. The teaching teams work together and support each other, and this collegial approach was evident at all three centres. Recently, staff from the centres have visited each other to support the establishment of the TESOL course at the Wellington and Christchurch campuses and this cross-campus collaboration is to be commended.

The placement tests and progress assessments are effective and ensure that students are clear about what they have achieved and what their next learning goals will be. A new achievement report which collates the results from the formative and summative assessments has proved useful in ensuring students, and in some cases their parents or agents, know exactly what they have achieved during their time studying with NZLC.

Learning a new language can be frustrating for some students and every effort is made to keep the class time engaging. The evaluation team heard that group-work, pair-work, and teacher and student-led approaches are used to ensure learner engagement. The structured morning classes are believed to be more productive than the afternoon skills-based class.

In-house professional development occurs at a campus level and it is clear that some of this is of benefit. The recent collaborative experience with the TESOL course highlighted the possibilities for cross-campus activity. Professional development seems to target less experienced tutors and there are fewer opportunities to extend experienced tutors' knowledge and understanding.

Regular student feedback quickly highlights if students are unhappy with their tutor. The issues are quickly explored and, if it is decided that the issue is related to the competence of the tutor, observation and feedback of teaching practice, combined with professional development, are used to support the tutor to develop their teaching capability.

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**.

There is excellent support available for the students who study at NZLC. Information given to students before and during enrolment is clear and the orientation is structured and informative. Students spoken to by the evaluation team were well informed about important information. There is continual study information and advice given to students, and at all times students can approach staff for guidance about an appropriate path of study.

The organisation manages its responsibilities effectively with respect to the pastoral care of the students. NZLC arranges all its homestays and all campuses have a vetted group of families used on a regular basis. The Code of Practice is reviewed annually and any issues

are quickly addressed. For younger students, a higher level of care is given. If a young student needs more support than NZLC can provide, parents are informed and a caregiver support option is made available.

Tutors are approachable and give students extra learning support where they can. Tutorials are available for Wellington students and are about to be established for those studying in Auckland. Recent professional development for staff in Auckland, related to working with a particular ethnic group, is a positive initiative which could be shared across the campuses.

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

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**.

NZLC has recently been through a change of ownership and this process has been handled efficiently. The management team transitioned the organisation through a stressful time with minimal impact on students and staff. Tutors generally feel positive about the change and noted that under the new structure they feel they are being consulted and are more closely involved in the organisation.

During this time of change, useful processes have been retained to ensure continuity. Quality assurance continues and the organisation recently came through an audit by English New Zealand (a group representing English language schools) with positive results.

The immediate focus for the new owner and management team has been the rebranding of the organisation and ensuring that key stakeholders know it is still operating effectively under the new name. However, longer-term vision and strategy are lacking and key performance indicators need to link more closely to information being collected and analysed. Systematic processes for planning involving the managers and staff across the different campuses are yet to be developed, although there is regular informal communication. The potential benefits of cross-campus collaboration are yet to be realised.

However, the organisation has retained staff in key management and teaching positions and maintained useful processes which ensure that important information is being collected and analysed. Therefore, the evaluation team feels confident that the organisation will move ahead effectively and successfully implement quality planning processes.

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 **Good**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Student support

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: General English

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

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.

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this 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 TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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).

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-eer/introduction/>

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