

Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Horizon College of English

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 24 August 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:	Napier
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	January 1991
Number of students:	Domestic: Nil equivalent full-time students International: 27-90 equivalent full-time students, including three under 18 years of age
Number of staff:	Five full-time equivalent teaching staff, 4 full-time equivalent administration and management staff
Scope of active accreditation:	One NZQA-approved course: Experiencing English
Sites:	Napier only
Distinctive characteristics:	Offers individualised programmes to match students' specific goals and personal needs, including preparation for International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Cambridge First Certificate or Advanced or TOIEC English examinations. The majority of students enrol to improve their English language. Approximately 40 students have attempted examinations in 2009.
Recent significant changes:	NA
Previous quality assurance history:	The most recent NZQA quality assurance visit was an audit in 2006 and the organisation met all requirements for registration at that time.
Other:	NA

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of New Horizon College of English (NHCE) included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support including international students.

The following programme focus area included all students enrolled with NHCE:

- Experiencing English.

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/for-providers/docs/eer-policy-conduct.pdf>

The evaluation team included an NZQA lead evaluator and one external evaluator. The external evaluation and review was conducted over one and a half days at the organisation's only site in Napier, and involved all staff at NHCE, including three members of the board who are actively involved in the day-to-day activities of the organisation. Interviews were conducted with teaching, support, and administration staff, and with a sample of students.

New Horizon College of English 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 **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **New Horizon College of English**.

Students are given a placement test on arrival and are placed into an English language class at the appropriate level. For most students this initial assessment is very accurate, with rare cases requiring students to be shifted to a higher or lower level. Students enrol for a variety of reasons and study for varying lengths of time, up to a maximum of 36 weeks. The majority of students enrol to gain increased confidence and capability with English language, and on average they stay for eight weeks. All students who stay for more than a few weeks make measurable progress, with formal assessments occurring every six weeks. Students' learning goals are established at the time of enrolment, and most students achieve their personal goals. Approximately 40 students in 2009 chose to enter IELTS and Cambridge or TOEIC examinations, and all but two have achieved success. Student surveys show that over 90 per cent are very satisfied with their experience at NHCE.

The organisation employs teachers who are very well qualified in teaching English to speakers of other languages. The pool of teachers includes some who have extensive teaching experience in New Zealand and overseas, as well as one with past experience as an auditor with English New Zealand, and two IELTS examiners. The school has very good physical and learning resources. NHCE is a member of English New Zealand and the most recent audit by that body resulted in NHCE meeting all requirements of the standard.

Students report high satisfaction with the education provided, including classroom-based learning and English language immersion homestays facilitated by the provider. Students also receive regular progress reports and these confirm that learners are progressing their English language goals while studying with the provider. NHCE is using language level descriptors developed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages¹ to provide additional clarity to staff and students regarding students' levels of capability in English language.

These factors provide the evaluation team with a high level of confidence that students are receiving a quality education and are well supported, and that future students are very likely to achieve success.

¹ http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/documents_intro/common_framework.html

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **New Horizon College of English**.

NHCE has made reasonable steps to begin establishing an evaluative approach to quality assurance and was able to demonstrate that it is making ongoing improvements, such as with supplementary learning material, student support, and matching students' learning needs. While the organisation does not yet have a comprehensive, organisation-wide approach to evaluative self-assessment, NHCE is currently developing its processes, including staff capability, systems, data collection, and review processes, but is yet to fully develop its organisational policies for evaluative self-assessment in its management system.

Staff were able to describe clearly the well-established informal processes for self-assessment where staff discuss and resolve emerging issues and make improvements in the course of day-to-day activities. This process appears to work very well for the organisation's current size.

The evaluation team is confident that the current informal self-assessment practices, and the steps already taken by management and staff to develop more planned and documented processes, are well considered and are highly likely to be effective and to contribute to meaningful improvements across the organisation. However, the evaluation team is not yet highly confident in the organisation's capability in self-assessment because evaluative self-assessment is not yet comprehensive and fully systematised across the organisation.

TEO response

New Horizon College of English has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Findings²

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 enrol at NHCE to achieve a range of English language goals, and these are established at the time of enrolment. These goals include gaining sufficient English language to travel in New Zealand and other English-speaking countries, improving English language skills for work opportunities in their home countries by sitting Cambridge or TOEIC examinations, and for some, preparing to sit IELTS examinations to gain access to a university in New Zealand.

Students sit a placement test on arrival to establish the appropriate level class. This process is effective, with very few students being shifted or requesting to be shifted in the initial week or two. Students undertake formative assessments weekly and summative assessments six-weekly, with the expectation that students will be ready to move up a level after approximately six weeks. Most students progress as expected.

The majority of students enrol for approximately four to six weeks in summer and 12 weeks in winter to gain a general improvement in their skills and confidence with the English language. In the main, students achieve these goals and student surveys show that 90 per cent are satisfied with their experience and approximately 20 per cent extend their stay. NHCE is using language level descriptors developed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages³ to provide additional clarity to staff and students regarding students' levels of capability with English language.

These factors indicate that NHCE has well-developed systems to initially place students at the correct level, and that students are very satisfied with their achievements and rate of progress.

The organisation monitors students' achievements at the individual student level through the six-weekly tests as well as by students' diaries. The organisation is currently developing processes to monitor students' achievements and progress overall, in order to enhance organisational evaluative self-assessment.

The evaluation team is confident that students are making good progress and are achieving well, and that the staff and management are monitoring student progress well. The enhancements being developed currently to track overall student achievements and progress are highly likely to add value and lead to meaningful ongoing improvements. The organisation has not yet established any clear external data with which to benchmark students' achievements.

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 http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/documents_intro/common_framework.html

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 **Good**.

The outcomes that students achieve are highly valued. All students gain increased confidence and ability to use English language in a variety of contexts and most students who attempt IELTS and Cambridge examinations achieve success. Students interviewed at this evaluation indicated clearly that the value of studying at NHCE was in gaining the confidence to use English language for travel, and for some to improve their chances of employment in their home country or in an English-speaking country. Improved IELTS average scores and passing Cambridge examinations has provided students with the ability to apply for access to specific programmes of study within New Zealand and overseas.

Where NHCE has enrolled international students under 18 years of age, it has maintained close communications with parents and recruitment agents and in the case of students aged between 11 and 13, close communications with their school-arranged caregivers. This has ensured that these students are safe and gain valued improvements in their English-language abilities, and a wider understanding of New Zealand culture. The organisation has established a Facebook page to keep in contact with past students.

NHCE has effective and well-established systems to monitor student satisfaction with their experience and to maintain appropriate communications with other interested parties. However, the organisation has not yet established a systematic and comprehensive evaluative self-assessment system which includes evaluating how well outcomes are valued.

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 **Good**.

NHCE has a well-established and documented management system with appropriate policies and procedures for student recruitment and enrolment. The organisation provides very full and appropriate information to students at the time of enrolment. The organisation has long-term relationships with a pool of translators to ensure they can provide new students with information and support in their first language where this is required.

Programmes are based on internationally recognised standard texts, and these are appropriately supplemented by a wide range of learning material which draws on current issues and matters of interest to the specific student group. This material is updated and refreshed regularly and provides an excellent support to the standard texts to stimulate students and maintain their interest. Students interviewed at this evaluation were complimentary of the learning resources provided and said they felt the material well matched their needs and interests.

Staff enjoy a very collegial environment where the sharing of resources, along with informal staff room discussions and peer support, provides a sound basis for staff to reflect and review how well their programmes are matching students' needs.

As already noted, the organisation is in the process of developing a systematic approach to evaluative self-assessment.

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 **Good**.

NHCE's owners have provided and maintained a well-appointed and resourced school and have employed academic staff who are appropriately qualified and experienced in teaching English to speakers of other languages. Individual staff members have been with the organisation for up to 11 years.

The quality of teaching is well monitored through a performance appraisal process involving self-review, management review, teaching observations, and some observations by teaching peers. While this performance appraisal process is linked to professional development, some concern was expressed that opportunities for development are limited in the Hawke's Bay region. Staff have arranged and attended local professional development events. However, professional development has a reduced budget allocation for the current year.

Students interviewed at this evaluation expressed high levels of satisfaction with their teachers and with the six-weekly assessments. Students noted that teachers were friendly, well prepared, knowledgeable, and keep them interested and challenged.

Staff are clearly passionate about their work and display a genuine concern for their students and interest in their well-being and academic progress. This is confirmed through stories of graduating students displaying genuine emotion over their progress and on their departure.

There is clearly very good teaching occurring at NHCE, as indicated above. The minor gaps observed at this evaluation are in terms of the need to explore alternative professional development options to ensure staff stay current with best practice and have some opportunities to refresh their teaching. Issues regarding evaluative self-assessment are noted in earlier sections of this report. Specifically, the connections between staff performance appraisal and ongoing professional development could be strengthened.

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 **Good**.

NHCE enrolls international students and, as such, is bound by the Code of Practice for Pastoral Care of International Students (Code of Practice). Students are provided with full and accurate information about studying at NHCE and specific information about Napier and New Zealand in general. The organisation takes a very personal interest in students' well-being and maintains appropriate records such as contact phone numbers in their home country. NHCE is in regular contact with the students' homestay providers and maintains contact with recruitment agents and students' families as appropriate.

Three international students under the age of 18 are currently enrolled and every care has been taken to ensure they have safe accommodation and are well supported in the learning environment. Students under 18 years of age who were interviewed at this EER expressed a high level of satisfaction with the support provided by NHCE regarding accommodation and study, and with the guidance and support provided in general. Excellent choice and supervision of homestays is provided; for example, police checks are carried out for all homestay arrangements. The organisation has occasional school groups of under 18 year olds who visit short periods, one of which is in conjunction with two local high schools.

The evaluation team observed that NHCE provides a family oriented and supportive learning environment, and both students and staff displayed warmth and respect for each other. The organisation has occasional school groups of under 14-year-olds who visit for short periods. Records and discussions with staff provide a good level of confidence that these students are very well cared for during their stay. Students have a contact phone number they can use 24-hours a day in case of emergency, and no issues or concerns regarding the Code of Practice were noted.

While the organisation monitors its compliance with the code six-monthly, as already noted issues regarding evaluative self-assessment in other areas are not fully developed, for example in reviewing the effectiveness of the organisation's responses to student complaints or concerns.

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**.

NHCE is a small organisation owned and operated by eight shareholders. All shareholders are involved in the governance of the organisation, with one holding the position of managing director. The organisation was established as a provider of English language tuition in 1988 and was registered with NZQA in 1991.

Strategic and business planning is in place and appropriate records are kept of board and staff meetings and key decisions. Educational outcome reporting at board level is still to be

developed. As already noted, the organisation uses a combination of informal and undocumented as well as formal processes in its operations, which is appropriate for its current size and context.

The managing director with other key staff is currently developing a more structured and documented approach to monitoring the organisation's educational performance. From staff discussions and documents cited at this evaluation, this planning is soundly based and progressing well and is highly likely to contribute well to the organisation's evaluative self-assessment practices. The organisation's informal and formal monitoring of educational success focuses primarily on individual students' progress and satisfaction, rather than the performance of the organisation as a whole.

NHCE has a well-established and documented management system which is updated regularly, reflecting a well-established culture of continuous improvement. However, the organisation has not yet fully adapted its policies and procedures to reflect recent changes to the ongoing requirements for registration with NZQA as a private training establishment. Some work has been done towards defining the organisation's approach to evaluative self-assessment, but this is yet to be fully completed.

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 including international students

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

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

International students receive exemplary support and guidance from the time of enrolment to their departure. Appropriate documentation is maintained of any emerging issues. Ongoing contact is maintained with all parties, such as parents of students under 18 years of age, recruitment agents, homestay providers, and the students themselves. NHCE is proactive in ensuring students' needs are very well catered for and that they are well prepared for a safe and successful stay in New Zealand.

2.3 Focus area: Experiencing 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.

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/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz