

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Southern Lakes English College

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 28 August 2013

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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

Name of TEO:	Southern Lakes English College
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 1, 57 Shotover Street, Queenstown
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	1 April 1993
Courses currently delivered:	<p>Southern Language English College (SLEC) offers General English and Examination Preparation for international examinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• International English Language Testing System (IELTS)• Preliminary English Test (PET)• Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE) and Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)• Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC)• Deakin University (Melbourne) examinations <p>SLEC is also an off-site testing centre for the University of Otago Language Centre in Dunedin.</p>
Code of Practice	Yes for students aged 11-13 years, 14-17 years

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signatory?:	and 18 years and upwards
Number of students:	Domestic: nil International: 63. The mix of nationalities is: Brazilian 11 per cent, Austrian 8 per cent, French 7 per cent, Swiss 9 per cent, Japanese 4 per cent, Russian 4 per cent, South Korean 9 per cent, Czech 5 per cent, German 9 per cent, Vietnamese 7 per cent, Thai 8 per cent, Chinese-speaking 7 per cent, Saudi Arabian 9 per cent, Other 4 per cent. SLEC has a policy aim of no more than 15 per cent of one nationality at any one time.
Number of staff:	Nine full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	As above
Distinctive characteristics:	SLEC is situated in the tourist town of Queenstown and attracts international students worldwide. It offers many and varied English Plus courses, such as English Plus Skiing/Snowboarding, English Plus Farmstay, English Plus Flying, English Plus Golf, English Plus Wine, English Plus Rugby, English Plus Demi Pair, and English Plus Volunteer Programme. The college also runs group holiday camps and special programmes. Most students are 16 years of age or older. SLEC also offers homestays with Queenstown residents, guest houses and several lodges. The organisation has established pathways to higher learning, such as Queenstown Resort College, Southern Institute of Technology, University of Otago Language Centre and Deakin University; and to colleges such as Wakatipu High School (Queenstown) and Dunstan High School (Alexandra).
Recent significant changes:	Three recent new roles have been created and appointments made: a full-time director of studies to support teaching staff and to provide a link between management and staff, a full-time student services administrator and a part-time internal accountant. These appointments have allowed the directors to focus on marketing and management.
Previous quality assurance history:	SLEC has recently gained full membership of English New Zealand and Quality English.

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2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected were the mandatory focus areas of governance, management and strategy, and international student support. The programme focus areas selected were General English (level 2) and General English Plus Examination Preparation (level 4). These are the two main programmes offered.

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 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.

The external evaluation and review (EER) team consisted of two evaluators who spent 1.5 days on site at Queenstown. The team met all the staff, including the owners/directors, most of the students, the six teachers, the director of studies, the student services administrator and the contracted homestay coordinator. They sighted a range of documentation including the induction pack, IELTS and Cambridge examination results from 2009, student evaluations of teachers and programmes, teacher performance checklists, staff job descriptions and curricula vitae, student evaluations of homestay experiences, and the English New Zealand audit. References from the chief executive officer of Southern Institute of Technology, the examination manager of the University of Otago Language Centre and Foundation Year, and the chief executive officer of Quality English were also sighted. The evaluators also saw a range of meeting minutes, self-review documentation, the quality management system, attendance and complaints documentation and a photographic record students make about their experiences at SLEC.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Southern Lakes English College**.

- SLEC is a student-centred organisation. Programmes for General English and Examination Preparation are well matched to the needs of individual learners.
- In 2011 and 2012, course and qualification completion rates were 100 per cent.
- Students who sat the Cambridge International Examinations had pass rates of 96 per cent for FCE in 2012 and 100 per cent for CAE in 2012.
- SLEC's policies and procedures, such as the aim of a maximum of 15 per cent of one nationality being enrolled at the college at any one time and the English-only policy, ensure students mix well as spoken English becomes the only shared way to communicate.
- Students have a range of opportunities to experience English language and New Zealand culture, for example English Plus courses such as skiing or golf. These activities are used to develop English language skills and to understand the New Zealand way of life in a dynamic, real context.
- The learning environment at SLEC is inclusive and family oriented. The college has a happy welcoming atmosphere and excellent pastoral care.
- Teachers are well qualified and experienced, and teaching is highly effective. Teachers and learners relate effectively to one another.
- The governance and management at SLEC is committed to the international student market and to providing a first-class educational experience for its students.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Southern Lakes English College**.

- SLEC has collected and analysed achievement data over time and across courses and programmes, including examination programmes, to benchmark its performance internally from year to year, with local providers, and nationally and internationally.
- This analysis has demonstrated that SLEC consistently exceeds these benchmarks and that student achievement is exemplary.

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- SLEC focuses on individual student achievement and tracks and analyses notable individual student results.
- SLEC's purpose and direction is clear and the leadership is inclusive. It recognises and uses the strengths, interests and feedback from internal stakeholders to inform its self-assessment processes.
- SLEC actively seeks feedback from external stakeholders formally and informally and uses this feedback to make improvements to its courses and programmes.
- SLEC's aligning of the General English curriculum with the Common European Framework provides an internationally recognised standard for grading an individual's language proficiency, which can be used to reference the standard of learner achievement at the college.
- NZQA's EER was welcomed as an opportunity to gain further external stakeholder input into SLEC's performance.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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**.

Learners complete courses and gain qualifications. In 2011 and 2012, course and qualification completion rates were 100 per cent. Students in the General English courses achieve well against their goals of balancing language acquisition and travel or further study. These students want English for practical purposes and receive a certificate of attendance at graduation.

Students who sat the Cambridge International Examinations had high pass rates in 2012, while those undertaking the TOEFL test scored above national and international benchmarks. Mock exam results were accurate in predicting final exam results for students, and students often improved their results in the exams, suggesting the exams were motivating for them and/or that the mock exam practice had benefitted them.

SLEC encourages students to do the examinations as it gives the student an international examination result that can be useful for further study or work opportunities. Over the time period 2009-2013 there have been only three CAE students who have entered the CAE examination and not passed, with the last failure being in 2011.

SLEC focuses on individual student achievement and tracks and analyses notable individual student results. Student feedback, both written and verbal, confirmed that students have positive learning experiences and acquire English language skills that improve their conversational and functional English language. It also confirmed that students improved their well-being and enhanced their confidence and abilities. The SLEC director has developed excellent detailed achievement data for all programmes, clearly demonstrating that most students can advance at a rate of 0.5 on IELTS every 12 weeks for all skills. The rates are often highest for conversational English and listening skills, which is understandable as these are the skills students come to an English-speaking country like New Zealand to improve. However, SLEC has initiated an increased focus on reading and writing skills to help address this imbalance. SLEC is aligning the General English curriculum with the Common European Framework, which provides a standard for grading an individual's language proficiency. This will provide another external marker that can be used to benchmark the quality of the learning at SLEC.

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

SLEC has collected and analysed achievement data over time and across all programmes to benchmark SLEC's performance internally from year to year, with local providers, and nationally and internationally. This analysis has demonstrated that SLEC student achievement is exemplary.

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 **Excellent**.

Students have a range of opportunities to experience English language and New Zealand culture while at SLEC. For example, homestay provides a range of naturally occurring opportunities for students to practise conversational English. It is also a great opportunity to introduce New Zealand families to cultures other than their own. All students are encouraged to stay with homestay families or at student lodge accommodation initially, to help them adjust to the New Zealand way of life and have the company of others. There is a careful matching process between students and the homestay families, with initial contact often occurring prior to the student arriving in New Zealand. Community involvement takes place through contact with homestay parents and activities arranged by SLEC, such as sporting and cultural events.

Programmes maintain relevance to stakeholders and communities. The Queenstown environment is unique and students have the opportunity to be involved in many practical activities with the English Plus programmes. Students may learn to ski or snowboard as well as learn English. The chosen activities allow the students to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts, enhancing their language acquisition. Some graduates stay on in New Zealand and progress to owning local businesses, for example a tourist shop, local food outlet or furniture business. Stakeholder feedback and references from local colleges and universities affirmed that SLEC students are well prepared for employment or further study opportunities. This was attributed to the positive, engaging atmosphere of SLEC, where students are encouraged to be open, to communicate freely and to embrace and learn from other cultures. The school has many positive stories to tell and has captured these anecdotally in booklets created by the students which include photographic records. Student comments and evaluations sighted clearly demonstrated that students enjoy experiencing New Zealand culture, both academically and socially.

SLEC is an off-site testing centre for IELTS, Cambridge and TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) examinations. Exam testing adds value for students both inside and outside the college. There are regular reviews and spot checks by Cambridge, providing another measure of SLEC's value. The evaluation team was on site during a Cambridge test day and was impressed by

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the facilities SLEC offered the students and the strict exam procedures observed, such as students needing to have their passports on the desk as photo identification.

SLEC is a student-centred organisation that actively seeks feedback from internal and external stakeholders formally and informally. The staff, including the owner/directors, are actively involved in the local Queenstown community. The college is part of the community and these community links assist the college to anticipate and respond to change appropriately and effectively.

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**.

The programmes for General English and Examination Preparation are well matched to the needs of individual learners. Effective stakeholder engagement is encouraged at all levels of SLEC in several important ways, including the enrolment policy aim of no more than 15 per cent of one nationality being enrolled at the college at any one time, and the English-only policy. These two measures ensure students mix well as spoken English becomes the only shared way to communicate. Class sizes usually average 10-12 students, allowing for individual attention, although with rolling enrolments this is sometimes exceeded. In 2013, there have been 293 student enrolments and 27 of these have asked for extensions, an indication of student satisfaction with the programme.

The learning environment is inclusive. The college has a happy, welcoming atmosphere, is open plan and is located in the central city close to all amenities. The physical environment is bright and cheerful with lots of posters around the college with practical advice relating to Queenstown, such as advice on keeping warm. The entry process is well documented and adhered to by the director of studies, who conducts the entry interviews with new students and encourages them to 'tell me about yourself'. The director of studies looks for ways to connect new students with current students through shared hobbies or interests. The director of studies also discusses the students' goals with them and encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning.

The school benefits from recommendations from past students, and some students return to study at SLEC more than once. While students voluntarily keep in contact through Facebook (1200 people) or visiting, destination data is mostly gathered informally as students may be at SLEC for anywhere between one week and one year.

Student feedback from interviews with the evaluators, student evaluations over time and observations by the evaluation team confirmed that students have positive learning experiences. They acquire English language skills that improve their conversational and functional English language, particularly their speaking and listening skills. This contributes to success at work, in further study or for examination purposes.

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 **Excellent**.

Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Teaching is highly effective and is matched to individual student needs and each student's continuum of language learning. Teachers and learners relate effectively to one another in a supportive, family-based environment. The evaluators observed three classes at different levels and noted that the teaching was highly organised and the teaching styles relaxed but focused. There was a focus on fluency, repetition, working in pairs and one-to-one discussion with the teacher. Students described their teachers as, 'kind, qualified and friendly, but strict'. They also reported that the small class sizes allowed teachers to work with them on an individual basis to help them achieve their goals. This individual focus includes teachers completing one student interview per week, covering the student's progress and goals. The completion of these interviews is followed up and recorded by the director of studies.

The appointment of the full-time director of studies has strengthened the quality of the teaching and the effectiveness of the interactions between staff and management at SLEC. The director of studies requires teachers to show evidence of weekly teaching plans that identify the skills involved in the plans, rather than simply describing the content to be covered. All teachers are observed by the director of studies once a term, and more often with new teachers. The feedback from the classroom observations is used to make decisions about appropriate professional development for respective teachers. Internal professional development occurs four to five times a year and external professional development is paid for by SLEC. The director of studies supports teachers to run internal workshops at SLEC and to take the same workshop to a conference to build up the teachers' confidence in sharing their expertise with others. The director of studies also works one-to-one with exam students from 3.00-5.00pm daily, taking some of the pressure off the teachers. This has led to measurable improvements, particularly with one group of students who required extra reading and writing sessions.

Staff are valued and work hard, with 25 contact teaching hours a week and the school only being closed for two weeks over Christmas. However, staff noted that SLEC readily grants unpaid leave and that, when required, there is access to well-

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qualified and experienced relief teachers. Feedback forms from students indicate that the teachers are meeting their learning needs and providing a friendly, fun learning environment. The staff dinner at the end of each year includes a professional development session where SLEC collects feedback formally from staff.

SLEC management supports student learning and teacher effectiveness through comprehensive self-assessment and review processes that recognise the importance of the teacher/student relationship to student progress. In 2012, a SLEC pathway student won the student of the year award by the New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers.

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**.

Responses to the well-being needs of learners are immediate and attention to individual student needs is exemplary. All staff are interested and involved in the pastoral care of students, giving students many options about whom to approach with issues. SLEC staff observe students closely but discreetly, which avoids any problems becoming major issues. The most significant factor in the pastoral care of the students is the warm welcoming atmosphere of the school – a reflection of the quality of the staff and the excellent staff-to-staff and staff-to-student relationships. This was reflected in the comment, 'We treat students like we've known them forever'.

Practical aspects that contribute to the welcoming atmosphere are meeting students at the airport and getting students into the school as soon as possible so that they can meet their new school family and make friends. Attendance is monitored morning and afternoon to ensure student absence is followed up quickly. SLEC understands its obligations under the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, and the evaluation team sighted the most recent code review.

SLEC has a homestay system of approximately 50 families and contracts an external person with extensive community knowledge to oversee this in partnership with SLEC. Currently, the homestay information is being introduced into the student management system to keep the information more centralised and accessible. Some students also stay in lodges in Queenstown.

The communication at SLEC is open and inclusive. There is an assembly every Friday where the students graduate and upcoming activities and events are discussed. Students respect the opportunities the school provides and staff consider it a privilege to work with the students. The balance between English

language acquisition and the social aspects of the school and how these contribute to each other is well understood by students and staff alike. SLEC seeks and uses the feedback from homestay and lodge accommodation providers to improve the service offered to students and to their homestay families.

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 **Excellent**.

SLEC's purpose and direction is clear, well understood and embraced by staff. It is reflected in the business plan where future goals and strategic direction are outlined. The leadership is inclusive and recognises and uses the strengths and interests of all staff. For example, a teacher with a particular interest in technology is to run an internal workshop for other staff on blended learning. Both owners are highly experienced teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), which gives them an excellent understanding of teaching and teachers. Resources are allocated to support learning and teaching and are focused on educational achievement. There is some use of computer technology in the teaching, but the emphasis and current preference of the majority of the teachers is for an interactive, teacher-initiated and led communicative approach.

SLEC has recently gained full membership of English New Zealand, and one of the SLEC directors is on the English New Zealand executive. This increased external focus has been made possible by the employment of a full-time director of studies who has taken over some of the director's day-to-day duties, allowing the director to focus on marketing and management. As a requirement for full English New Zealand membership, two teaching staff, while highly experienced, were required to complete the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA). They undertook this at a Christchurch Category 1 provider², at SLEC's expense, and gained A grades.

Effective community engagement is encouraged. For example, SLEC has developed a range of pathways with local high schools and tertiary providers and is involved with Southern Institute of Technology around developing international education in the region through Study Queenstown, a contact centre for education providers in the region. This relationship has led to Southern Institute of Technology outsourcing the management of its English Language Institute in Invercargill to SLEC. The Southern Institute of Technology (chief executive officer) wrote in a reference, 'We have the upmost confidence in SLEC to provide quality

² A category 1 provider has received two Highly Confident judgments from EER, or Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.

English language teaching and assessment for our SIT international students. SLEC are very experienced, have an excellent reputation and are the main ESOL specialists in the Southern region'.

Self-assessment is ongoing and comprehensive and includes improvements made as a result of the English New Zealand and Quality English audits, spot checks from Cambridge, feedback from internal stakeholders and benchmarking analyses. This ongoing cycle of review, which pre-dates NZQA's EER process, is participated in by all staff and contributes significantly to the high rates of educational achievement and personal success attained by SLEC students.

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 **Excellent**.

Refer section 1.6

2.2 Focus area: International 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**.

Refer section 1.5

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 **Excellent**.

Refer sections 1.1-1.6

2.4 Focus area: General English Plus Examination Preparation (level 4)

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

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

Refer sections 1.1-1.6

Recommendations

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

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are 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.

Self-assessment and participation 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 NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, 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 Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, 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 External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

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 External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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