

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Aotea Community Trust Incorporated
trading as Kapiti Skills Centre

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 11 February 2016

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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:	Kapiti Skills Centre (Kapiti Skills)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	35 Ihakara Street, Paraparaumu 5032
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	1 January 1994
Courses currently delivered:	Outdoor Activity programmes for secondary school students
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	400 on short courses (30 equivalent full-time students)
Number of staff:	Three part-time
Scope of consent to assess:	http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=944634001
Distinctive characteristics:	The PTE was established in 1994 and has been delivering foundation education level 1–3 programmes for the bulk of that time. More recently, Kapiti Skills has provided a wide range of bespoke outdoor activity programmes for up to 20 secondary schools from Wellington to Whanganui. The students are enrolled with secondary schools and have chosen an optional subject 'Outdoor Education'. The Kapiti Skills outdoors programmes facilitate school students to experience outdoor activities, such as rock

climbing, kayaking and bush walking. On average, students gain between 5 and 20 credits which contribute towards completing their NCEA Level 1, 2 or 3.

Recent significant changes: Kapiti Skills has recently appointed a new Board of Trustees, reviewed its strategic direction and strengthened its focus on the Outdoor Activities programmes. The acting manager of Kapiti Skills has moved to the Waikato region, but remains as the acting manager in the meantime, until a replacement is appointed.

Previous quality assurance history: Kapiti Skills Centre was most recently evaluated by NZQA in March 2015, resulting in NZQA being Not Confident in educational performance and capability in self-assessment. The issues identified at the previous evaluation related to:

- weak governance and management
- a lack of strategic planning
- financial viability
- not staying abreast with changes in the tertiary education environment
- limited community engagement.

NZQA placed conditions on Kapiti Skills. They are prohibited from enrolling any new students or carrying out any assessment against unit standards within their consent to assess, until their capability in this area had been reassessed, and subject to the findings of this evaluation.

Aotea Community Trust Incorporated met moderation requirements for all standards submitted to NZQA in 2015 with the exception of Literacy standard 26625. The issues identified in the moderation report for that standard need to be addressed before further assessment occurs. There have been two visits from Skills Active Industry Training Organisation to review Kapiti Skills' capability in assessment in the Outdoor activity field. This is a work in progress, but it is likely to result in the current sanctions on Kapiti Skills' ability to carry out assessments against unit

standards to be relaxed somewhat.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of this evaluation included two focus areas:

- The mandatory focus area of governance and management, which provides an overview of the strategic and operational levels of the organisation
- the Outdoors programme, which is the only course delivered by Kapiti Skills.

This external evaluation and review (EER) included a review of the programme performance over a longer period of time than is usual for an NZQA evaluation. This was largely because of the result from the previous evaluation. The evaluators considered it prudent to explore as wide as possible to gain a longer-term view of the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of Kapiti Skills.

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.

Before the site visit, Kapiti Skills Centre submitted a self-assessment summary and its quality improvement plan, which it developed in response to the previous evaluation. The NZQA evaluators reviewed these documents before the visit, along with information gathered from NZQA's database and Kapiti Skills' website.

Two evaluators visited Kapiti Skills in Paraparaumu for one and a half days. They interviewed the four members of the Board of Trustees, the Kapiti Skills Centre acting manager, the outdoor program manager-tutor, four high school teachers from four schools that contract with Kapiti Skills. They also spoke with staff from the Skills Active Industry Training Organisation, who are currently reviewing Kapiti Skills' ability in assessment in the Outdoor Activity field.

The evaluators reviewed a wide range of organisational records and documents to confirm and validate information gathered from the interviews.

Summary of Results

Statements of confidence on educational performance and capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance and in the capability in self-assessment of the **Kapiti Skills Centre**.

The main reasons for this level of confidence are:

- Between 2006 and 2015 Kapiti Skills outdoor education programs have enabled school students to achieve between five and 20 credits towards their NCEA (National Certificate in Educational Achievement Levels 1, 2 and 3). Achievement rates have consistently been between 80 and 90 per cent over this period.
- The number of schools working with Kapiti Skills has increased from 5 to 15 between 2006 and today, with a further five schools showing interest in operating outdoor activities programmes using Kapiti Skills for 2016.
- Students gain added value beyond the unit standard credits, including a range of soft skills such as confidence and improved sense of self-worth, and improvements to classroom study when they return to school.
- Kapiti Skills is currently focusing on outdoor education programmes to build its educational and self-assessment capability, with plans to re-establish foundation education programs in the future. This is important because the organisation is taking a carefully planned approach to rebuilding the organisation, focussing on its strengths with offering outdoor activity programmes for schools.
- In response to the previous NZQA evaluation, the organisation has appointed a new board of trustees and developed a new strategic plan focusing on rebuilding the organisation, ensuring its financial viability, and working first on what is working well - the outdoor activities programme. The board of trustees includes personnel with relevant experience for outdoor activities, financial experience and small-business ownership. These skills provide NZQA with the basis for confidence that the organisation is likely to continue building on its strengths.
- Kapiti Skills uses a range of surveys to review and analyse client school and student satisfaction with the outdoor activities programme. These surveys show a very high level of satisfaction. Informal oral feedback is also a feature of the organisation's self-assessment, with regular daily and weekly contact with schools and a structured debrief immediately after each outdoor activities programme. The organisation may find some benefits in documenting the key points from these informal feedback sessions for later reflection and including this information with the analysis of the written survey data.

Final Report

- The organisation and its trust members have a strong focus on compliance, especially in ensuring students are safe in the outdoors. Appropriate certification (e.g. Certificate of Compliance for white-water rafting) is maintained through Maritime New Zealand¹, NZOIA (New Zealand Outdoor Instructor's Association) for bush and rock activities², and OutdoorsMark (Safety Audit Certification)³.
- Kapiti Skills maintains a database of outdoor activity programmes and achievement rates. The PTE regularly reviews this to monitor achievement over time and identify any emerging patterns or trends.
- The evaluators consider the changes made since the previous evaluation are likely to provide the strong oversight and strategic direction required to build on the success of the outdoor activities programmes: therefore NZQA can have confidence in Kapiti Skills. The organisation's self-assessment processes include a mix of documented and informal or undocumented processes, and the new board of trustees is in the process of developing formal self-review processes to examine its effectiveness as it becomes more established.

¹ <http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/Commercial/Safety-management-systems/Safe-operational-plans/Rafts-SOP.asp>

² <http://www.nzoia.org.nz/instructors-and-guides>

³ OutdoorsMark is administered by Skills Active.
<http://www.skillsactive.org.nz/Default.aspx?page=5352>

Findings⁴

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**.

Kapiti Skills outdoors activities programmes offered for secondary schools have enabled students to achieve at a consistently high level. Between 2006 and 2015 achievement rates have consistently been between 80 to 90 per cent, with an average of 82 per cent. Students on these programmes achieve between five and 20 credits towards their NCEA level 1, 2 or 3. These achievement rates are significant, as many students come with a history of low achievement in other school subjects. Kapiti Skills said there were some students who were achieving credits in outdoor pursuits and these were the only credits achieved towards their NCEA.

Kapiti Skills noted that students also achieve significant growth in soft skills: for example, confidence in outdoor activities such as rafting, rock climbing or low and high ropes. Positive changes are also recorded in students' attitudes and engagement with school classroom-based learning. This was confirmed through interviews with school outdoors pursuits teachers.

While the organisation has not been able to establish any external benchmarks with similar organisations, it has more recently been communicating with a similar organisation based in Dunedin. The relationship is primarily for support with assessment, but potentially also for benchmarking activities. This may provide opportunities in the future to compare student's achievements with similar outdoor programmes in Dunedin.

The organisation's self-assessment includes student surveys and informal feedback from schools and students, as well as a structured but informal debrief at the end of each outdoors programme. This combination of methods is providing Kapiti Skills with clear indications of the success of this programme. The formal review and analysis of surveys and the informal reflection from debrief sessions is providing a sound basis for the organisation to maintain its performance and to improve in the future.

⁴ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

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**.

Students and schools (as stakeholders) gain significant value from the outdoor activities programmes. This value is the unit standard credits contributing to students completing their NCEA qualification as well as students gaining confidence and skills to safely pursue outdoor activities such as rafting and rock climbing.

As noted, there is significant value gained through students' changed attitudes to classroom-based learning. This is reported to have a flow on effect to students' success in other subjects, although the extent of this was not documented or validated at this evaluation.

There is an increase in the number of schools engaging the services of Kapiti Skills, with a similar number of schools to 2015 already having booked programmes for next year and a further five schools showing interest in making bookings. From 2006 to 2015 the number of schools making bookings grew from five to 15 and a further five are negotiating for programmes to run in 2016. This growth in interest from schools is one indicator of client satisfaction with the value gained.

The main outdoors instructor is also a registered workplace assessor with Skills Active, enabling him to conduct assessments under secondary schools accreditation where this is required. This provides an added value to these schools, who often do not have appropriately trained or certified teachers to carry out the assessment.

Kapiti Skills has well established networks with the secondary schools in the lower half of the North Island. The evaluators sighted evidence confirming that the ongoing communication and feedback from these schools was highly positive. This was confirmed through evaluator interviews with teachers in charge of outdoor education in five of these schools.

The organisation's self-assessment processes are, as noted, primarily through surveys, post-course debriefing, and ongoing informal communication with the schools it contracts with. These processes are sound, and the organisation uses them effectively to monitor the value of student outcomes. Kapiti Skills' analysis of survey data shows that schools outdoor programme co-ordinators and the students are highly satisfied with the experience and that the credits gained contribute significantly to completing NCEA. Ongoing improvements include changing the range of activities and improving the outdoors equipment to add further value.

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 outdoors programmes offered to schools are individually designed to meet each school's needs. Programmes can range from one to several days duration. A variety of activities are included, with some occurring over a longer period of time (possibly months). Students prepare by learning the theory at school and then the practical activities in the outdoors, where assessment also occurs.

Instructors work closely with individual students to cater for individual's needs, to build personal confidence and skills. This individualised approach is ensuring the high achievement rates.

As noted, Kapiti Skills is very focussed on meeting safety and compliance requirements from NZOIA, Maritime New Zealand, and Skills Active. This was confirmed on site, as well as by each of these organisations through phone interviews during this evaluation.

The organisation has clear and accurate records for each programme offered. However, specific activities (for example, mountain biking routes) and alternative sites or activities for inclement weather are primarily known by the instructors and less well documented. While this lack of documentation poses no risk to students or schools, there is a potential risk to the continuity of Kapiti Skills' programmes if one or more instructor taking alternative employment.

The increasing number of schools choosing to use Kapiti Skills for their outdoor programmes is one indicator of success. Other self-assessment processes include student and school surveys, and informal feedback as already noted. This combination provides Kapiti Skills with a sound understanding of how well its programmes and activities match students and other stakeholders needs.

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**.

Teaching is effective, as shown by the achievement rates and the added value students' gain. The programme is delivered in a relaxed informal learning environment in the outdoors, using an adventure-based learning approach, where students are challenged physically and mentally to solve problems and collaborate with their fellow students.

The instructors are qualified adventure activities instructors, holding appropriate certifications and undergoing appropriate audits of equipment and safety

management systems. The tutors have a combination of extensive secondary school teaching and teaching management experience. The tutors also hold relevant unit standards for assessing competency-based assessment and the moderation of assessments. The instructors undertake appropriate professional development to stay current with industry best practice. This was confirmed by documentation held on site and through discussions with the certification bodies, as already noted.

Kapiti Skills is working with Skills Active to address assessment concerns resulting from the previous evaluation. Skills Active and NZQA's Risk business unit have conducted two site visits to observe assessment practice, and the process is underway to lift assessment restrictions put in place following the previous EER (this has been confirmed by Skills Active and NZQA Risk staff).

Kapiti Skills is also exploring a memorandum of understanding with a Dunedin-based private training establishment. The organisations will work together to support the development of stronger assessment and moderation practices of unit standard assessments beyond the outdoor activities domain. This was a requirement as a result of the previous NZQA evaluation.

The organisation monitors satisfaction with the quality of teaching through a range of processes: for example, student and school surveys, informal discussions with schools, and the schools' rebooking rate, which remains high and is growing. These processes are used effectively and provide Kapiti Skills with a good level of knowledge of what is working well and where improvements can be made.

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**.

Support and guidance on the short outdoors programmes is primarily through attention to safety. The information reviewed during this evaluation indicated that Kapiti Skills pays an exemplary level of attention to ensuring students are safe, and no serious incidents have been noted or recorded by Kapiti Skills, or evident in the evaluators' conversations with the certifying bodies.

The organisation gave one example where a student failed the programme due to a breach of standard operating procedures, indicating the attention to safety. Client school teachers who the evaluators interviewed confirmed they "absolutely supported" using Kapiti Skills for their outdoor programmes and stated "Kapiti Skills offer a very professional level of support for students ... there are no issues no concerns".

The instructors and the board of trustees discussed with the evaluators their attention to health and safety, and ensuring that all certifications are maintained, including

external audits by Maritime New Zealand for rafting and NZOIA for rock climbing and bush walking.

Student surveys show a very high level of satisfaction, and the debriefing process at the end of each programme is seen as good practice by the industry. It identifies any emerging issues or near misses as close as possible to the outdoors experience.

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**.

Kapiti Skills has a strong focus on student achievement. This was demonstrated through the records of student achievement going back many years, student and school survey data showing high levels of satisfaction with student progress and achievement, and the evaluators' interviews with the instructors, board of trustees and participating school outdoor programme teachers.

Following the previous NZQA evaluation, Kapiti Skills was required to develop an 'improvement plan'. It is being implemented to address the issues raised at the previous evaluation related to governance and management, strategic planning, financial viability, staying abreast with changes in the tertiary education environment and community engagement. The organisation has appointed an entirely new board of trustees and an acting manager with extensive experience in the tertiary education sector. The changes made to date indicate the organisation has established a sound basis on which to continue.

The board of trustees includes personnel with relevant experience for the programme currently offered, financial experience and small-business ownership. These skills provide NZQA with the basis for confidence that the organisation is likely to continue building on its strengths. The new board is yet to develop a structured process to review its performance and current plans (while informal) include referencing the Institute of Directors self-review process.

Kapiti Skills has established a new strategic plan for re-establishing its place as a sound and trusted tertiary education provider. They aim to strengthen the current outdoor programme offerings and conservatively moving forward with the objective of re-establishing foundation programmes in the future.

The organisation has been working constructively with NZQA to rectify issues identified at the previous evaluation. Kapiti Skills has made considerable progress with Skills Active to re-establish its ability to carry out assessments within its Consent to Assess unit standards, and report results directly to NZQA once again.

The organisation has established surveys to review students and other stakeholders' satisfaction with their services. These are reviewed regularly for

emerging issues. Students' progress is well tracked and recorded in the database, and there was clear evidence that this information is used to monitor educational performance.

The evaluation team considers that Kapiti Skills has made sufficient progress since the previous evaluation for NZQA to be confident in their educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

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: Outdoor Programmes

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

NZQA recommends that Kapiti Skills Centre:

- Continue to implement its 'improvement plan'
- Develop a structured process to review the effectiveness of its governance processes
- Explore ways to document the main points of the oral feedback from current informal processes.

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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Final Report