



# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Rotorua English Language Academy

Date of report: 22 October 2009

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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.*

## Brief description of TEO

Location: Central Rotorua

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: 35-180 students. Courses range from one week to two years

Sites: Rotorua

Rotorua English Language Academy first opened in 1993 and has been registered as a private training establishment with NZQA since 1994. Rotorua English Language Academy offers three courses that have been quality assured and approved by NZQA.

- Certificate in General English for Speakers of Other Languages (Level 3)
- Language and Methodology for Overseas English Teachers (Level 4)
- Tour Group Programme.

Most students enrol on the Certificate in General English for Speakers of Other Languages (Level 3). This runs continuously, with enrolments taken each Monday. The programme is individualised for each student, with some enrolling for one week and others for up to two years.

Language and Methodology for Overseas English Teachers (Level 4) is offered as a short course to visiting teachers of English, or to students interested in becoming teachers of English in their own countries. This course can run between two and four weeks, and can lead to students taking the Cambridge Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT).

Tour Group Programme is offered to groups of international students aged between 13 and 17. This programme offers students English language development and a cultural and social experience of New Zealand.

The previous two quality audits of Rotorua English Language Academy by NZQA were conducted in 2003 and 2006 and on each of these occasions the organisation met all requirements of Quality Assurance Standard One, the standard then in force, and the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (Code of Practice).

MoE Number: 9497

NZQA Reference: C000003

*This report has been checked by the Rotorua English Language Academy for factual accuracy.*

# Executive Summary

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Rotorua English Language Academy. Key reasons for this are:

- The majority of Rotorua English Language Academy's students enrol to learn or to improve their knowledge of English language. This evaluation has confirmed that students achieve a significant improvement on their starting point. Students and their teachers expressed a high degree of satisfaction with this improvement.
- A small proportion of Rotorua English Language Academy's students enrol to improve their knowledge of English language in order to improve their International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score. The IELTS test results sighted showed that the majority of these students have made significant progress, with most students gaining scores between 5.5 and 7.0. These scores will enable students to apply for entry to higher study.
- A sample of students was interviewed and their comments combined with their course evaluations, showing a consistently high level of satisfaction with having their learning needs met, and of being challenged and extended. This has resulted in high student motivation to learn, extend their study time, or to return for further study.
- Six-weekly course assessments show that students' achievements are at or above the expected progress rate as based on the Common European Framework<sup>1</sup>. Rotorua English Language Academy's monitoring of the timing of assessment showed there would be value in extending the assessments from five to six weeks. Adjusting the timing of assessments has contributed to this academic progress, because students are more ready for assessment at six-weekly intervals.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **highly confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Rotorua English Language Academy.

- Teaching staff and management were confident in the robustness of their processes for monitoring and reviewing the organisation's educational effectiveness. Teaching staff discussed how staff openness, frank discussion, and the willingness

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<sup>1</sup> The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) can be used to set clear targets for achievements within language learning. It has become accepted as a way of benchmarking language ability, and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner. Source: [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int) and [www.cambridgeesol.org](http://www.cambridgeesol.org) 8 October 2009.

among all staff to share good practice and to support each other in problem-solving were keys to the strength of Rotorua English Language Academy's success.

- Rotorua English Language Academy has a well-structured and effective set of policies appropriate to the small size of the business. A strength of the internal review processes was that effectiveness is reviewed informally as issues arise, and more formally on an annual cycle. The combination of these two practices has resulted in robust and ongoing improvement, while also maintaining continuity for students' learning.
- The focus of Rotorua English Language Academy's staff, including the governing body and management, was on students' learning outcomes. This focus was not limited to progress with English language, but also included social and cultural outcomes. This wider focus is reflected in students feeling welcomed on arrival, having a positive experience with the range of nationalities in the student group, and making excellent academic progress. Students' six-weekly surveys and interviews confirmed that this was in fact the case.
- Rotorua English Language Academy supplements its own self-assessment data with two credible external audits and two web-based student surveys. These represent a realistic assessment of student achievement against external measures.

# 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 (ITPQuality) 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](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)).*

# Findings

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

*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>*

## Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of Rotorua English Language Academy included the following mandatory focus areas:

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

The following programme focus area represents the majority of student enrolments.

- General English.

## Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

*This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.*

### 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**.

#### **Context**

Rotorua English Language Academy runs small classes and purposefully maintains a cross-section of nationalities in each class to the extent that it can. This practice provides a personalised and culturally stimulating learning environment. All teachers are required to hold a recognised qualification for teaching English to speakers of other languages. Where this is not the case, new teachers are mentored by a qualified and experienced teacher. Teachers were well respected by colleagues and students. Students and staff were very well satisfied with academic progress.

*This report has been checked by the Rotorua English Language Academy for factual accuracy.*

## **Explanation**

Rotorua English Language Academy establishes the English-language level of students on arrival using the Nelson Quick Check Test and the Oxford Placement Test, and tracks their progress every six weeks. Students complete satisfaction surveys every six weeks, rating their academic progress and social and support processes. Staff discuss students' progress every six weeks. Students make highly significant improvements in their command and understanding of the English language. Teachers and students commented on their high satisfaction with the rate of improvement.

A few students enrol for one week of tuition for a variety of reasons, and their progress is minimal, as would reasonably be expected. However, a number of these students extend their stay or return for further tuition. This indicates that these students are generally satisfied with their own improvement. Most students enrol for a longer period of time, and Rotorua English Language Academy is able to show that the students make significant measurable improvements.

The General English programme is based on the standard texts, New Headway and Cutting Edge, with extensive supplementary learning material. The progress of Rotorua English Language Academy's students is above the rates expected when benchmarked against the Common European Framework. Student files support this.

Rotorua English Language Academy's focus on social and cultural as well as academic outcomes is monitored by formal student surveys, informal comments, and staff observations. Analysis of student surveys shows a high level of satisfaction with these social and cultural outcomes. Teacher and student interviews revealed that this aspect of the learning environment contributes to academic achievement. Students' comments included: "they are great teachers"; "I feel like I am making huge improvements"; "I couldn't speak [English] at all when I came [here], I feel I've improved a lot".

## **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**

### **Context**

Rotorua English Language Academy monitors student satisfaction, and where appropriate, parental satisfaction, as well as that of recruitment agents. A variety of processes is used to collect this data in different forms. Survey forms are collected from students every six weeks and on departure, and these are analysed, collated, and acted on to make improvements. Rotorua English Language Academy also maintains a file of unsolicited feedback from ex-students, parents, agents, and other local stakeholders such as homestay parents and tourism operators, which shows widespread satisfaction with outcomes. The organisation uses the social networking website, Facebook, to stay in contact with graduates and to monitor student satisfaction. Rotorua English Language Academy experiences very few student withdrawals, indicating a high level of student satisfaction.

## **Explanation**

The learning experience offered at Rotorua English Language Academy and the actual improvements in English are highly valued by all involved. The organisation has established this through a wide range of sources, such as formal surveys of students, staff, parents, recruitment agents, informal or unsolicited feedback, and maintaining the Facebook site to stay in touch with students, their families, and other interested parties.

Rotorua English Language Academy has a number of students who extend their planned time of study, or who subsequently return for further study. Further to this, Rotorua English Language Academy reports that a large number of enrolments are referrals from friends and ex-students. Management interprets this result as due to personal international contacts and a sound reputation built up over a number of years. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Rotorua English Language Academy employs no marketing staff, by comments from staff and students that they chose the organisation based on its reputation, and by the fact that the General English course and texts are based on the Common European Framework. Rotorua English Language Academy has not been able to collect long-term outcome data for students. The reason for this was reported to be due to the fact that students leave New Zealand at the end of study and return to their home country.

### **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**

## **Context**

Rotorua English Language Academy uses two needs assessment tools to place students in the right class level. The Nelson Quick Check Test is used initially, and this is followed by the Oxford Placement test. Students complete a survey every six weeks and on departure, to determine their satisfaction with their training. Students' academic, social, and cultural needs are being well met.

## **Explanation**

Students enrol with Rotorua English Language Academy primarily to improve their English, and a small percentage enrol to improve their IELTS score. The Nelson Quick Check Test and the Oxford Placement Test are standard tests for placing English language students into an appropriate class level. Students' satisfaction survey results and students' comments indicated that their academic needs were being very well met. Further to this, students and staff interviewed stated that students' social, cultural, and personal needs were also being well met. Both groups talked of the family feeling and close personal attention they experienced at Rotorua English Language Academy. Students spoke of the warmth of their welcome and in many cases of being provided for beyond their expectations. Students are provided with a range of supplementary learning material to support the standard texts.

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This provides the students with local context for their English language development. The evaluation team regarded the level of support provided as beyond the requirements of the Code of Practice.

## 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**.

### **Context**

Teachers are required to hold an internationally recognised teaching certificate for teaching English to speakers of other languages, such as the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA). Teachers and students relate well to one another, and active student–teacher engagement and respect is apparent. Students’ progress, as noted in student files, indicates that there are effective teaching strategies in place, and this is confirmed by student and teacher comments. Some teaching staff have been with Rotorua English Language Academy for up to 15 years.

### **Explanation**

Rotorua English Language Academy uses standard English-language course texts. These are supplemented by material covering a variety of current topical issues to provide a New Zealand context and additional challenges and variety for students, and to match student interests. This aim is reflected in one teacher’s comment: “We are not textbook bound”. Rotorua English Language Academy employs a director of studies who has responsibility for the programme overview, and for arranging professional development for teaching staff. With student enrolments varying between 35 and 180 at any one time the organisation has a challenge finding sufficient well-trained staff at short notice. New staff and especially new graduates or unqualified teaching staff are “buddied” with another experienced and qualified teacher. Staff interviewed commented that this provided an effective mechanism for new staff to develop their teaching skills, and to adopt the Rotorua English Language Academy staff culture. The evaluation team observed staff interactions and was particularly taken with the open and frank discussions and the high level of trust that was apparent in the organisation between management and all staff.

Students also commented on this openness, noting that teachers were very approachable and available after class if needed. Self-study classes are arranged weekly for students to undertake further study and this includes the use of interactive media. Students confirmed that this helped to improve their progress.

In 2006 Rotorua English Language Academy carried out research into the effectiveness of the timing of assessments and as a result adjusted periodic assessments to suit students’ actual progress as well as adjusting assessment tools to match the learning outcomes covered. Staff noted that this has resulted in more motivated students and better progress.

Students are surveyed on the Thursday of the first week to assess whether they are placed in the appropriate course level. Staff discussed the high attendance rates of students at

Rotorua English Language Academy as being an indication to them of their effectiveness as teachers.

Two teaching observations are carried out annually by the director of studies, and staff are supported to undertake professional development. This enables teachers to have feedback on their effectiveness in the classroom and to remain current with industry trends. In early 2009 the director of studies resigned, and while a replacement was found quickly, there was a significant period during which this position was vacant. Rotorua English Language Academy was aware of the impact this would have on its programmes and took appropriate steps to ensure the tasks associated with the role were covered by existing staff. As a result of the vacancy, the teaching observations for 2009 have not yet taken place. However, the evaluation team did not see evidence of any negative impact from this.

## 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**.

### **Context**

Students at Rotorua English Language Academy are international students either visiting New Zealand as tourists or specifically on student visas. Rotorua English Language Academy receives a few enrolments from new migrants wishing to improve their English. The organisation is a signatory to the Code of Practice, which is a requirement for enrolling international students. Students interviewed said they were very well looked after and had easy access to full information about life and study in New Zealand. Rotorua English Language Academy offers a significant after-school activities programme, which, judging by student comments, is very much appreciated.

### **Explanation**

Students interviewed said Rotorua English Language Academy was the “best of all”, and “they go the extra mile”. Students are picked up from the airport, have their homestay arranged and monitored, are made aware of local safety and legal issues such as city-centre liquor bans, and are provided with emergency phone contact, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

As noted in other sections of this report, students commented on the extent to which they are supported to achieve academically. There was a very overt sense of family and caring expressed quite freely by staff and students during this evaluation.

Management spoke of the “huge support received by the local [migrant] community”. They specifically mentioned their willingness to help with translations and support for students when this was needed. This extends the support for the students beyond Rotorua English Language Academy’s staff.

Rotorua English Language Academy was able to give examples of how it has taken immediate and appropriate steps to improve processes to better support and protect its students, where issues were identified with pastoral care and support. Where this involves

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community agencies, these have been accessed appropriately and staff have provided students with personal support.

## 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**.

### **Context**

Rotorua English Language Academy is a small organisation with two directors, one holding the role of principal. The directors are supported by a manager, a director of studies, teaching staff, and office support staff. The organisation has a dynamic set of policies and procedures to guide and support the operation. There are a number of supporting documents such as the Handbook for Teachers and the Student Handbook. The organisation is well led and guided, and staff enjoy an open and trusting work environment, where they are consulted and involved in the decisions over strategic and operational direction.

### **Explanation**

Staff interviewed said they have a clear understanding of the organisation's purpose and direction, and that there is openness in their communications with each other and management. Staff comments included "it's like a family", "it's like coming home". Staff spoke of having frequent informal meetings where issues were discussed and matters resolved. These meetings are supported by more formal processes such as regular planned meetings. Staff appreciated and valued the fact that management was consultative, and was open to listening and sharing ideas to bring about improvements to matters such as teaching, student support, planning for fluctuating student numbers, the absence of a key staff member.

The evaluation team noted a strong coherence of purpose and direction among all staff, including management and the principal. The organisational culture was also reflected in student comments about staff support, their friendliness, and their willingness to help and support students to achieve their learning goals.

Rotorua English Language Academy maintains membership with English New Zealand, which promotes quality English teaching and conducts periodic quality audits, and similarly with Quality English, a UK-based organisation also focused on promoting quality English language teaching. These are important facets of the governance and management of Rotorua English Language Academy because together they provide further external checks. Where improvements are seen to be needed they are discussed and implemented immediately. One example of this was identified by the principal at a recent conference, on 'critical incident management'. Another example noted was a situation where key staff, such as the director of studies, were absent. In this case the principal and manager arranged with the teaching staff to share responsibilities in order to maintain continuity and oversight of teaching so as to minimise the impact on student learning.

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The principal and manager felt that the organisation “could run for a sustained period” without their presence if necessary. They expressed high confidence in their systems, the culture of the organisation, and in their teaching and office staff.

## Part 2: Performance in focus areas

*This section reports any significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.*

### 2.1 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**

#### **Context**

General English is the main course offered at Rotorua English Language Academy. This course attracts the majority of student enrolments.

#### **Explanation**

Student files noted the individual's English language level on entry and progress in English language at six-weekly intervals following assessments. Students make significant progress at Rotorua English Language Academy. In fact, their progress exceeds expectations, and this is reflected in the iGraduate International Language Barometer and is confirmed by student comments. Teaching staff interviewed said they were very happy with student progress, and noted the number of students who extend their planned study, and others who return at a later date for further study.

Students noted that the organisation's focus on support and guidance, the planned self-study times, and the after-school activities all contributed to their motivation and ability to progress in the General English course.

Identified gaps in provision such as the absence of the director of studies have been well managed and student achievement has not been compromised.

Staff and management are maintaining appropriate records of student achievement and were able to discuss how the system as a whole worked and how they knew their processes worked to support learner achievement in this focus area. The combination of formal and informal meetings, maximising opportunities as they arise, combined with more formal or planned procedures, was noted as a particular strength. This flexible and dynamic approach is a reflection of the culture of the organisation as a whole.

### Mandatory focus area: Code of Practice for Pastoral Care of 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 **Excellent**.

#### **Context**

Rotorua English Language Academy has delivered education programmes to international students since it was established in 1993. One staff member has specific responsibilities for

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arranging homestay accommodation and for monitoring student satisfaction with these arrangements.

### **Explanation**

All staff are involved to some degree in the welfare, care, and support of the international students, which means there are many people watching out for the students. This was noted as a strength in the overall care and protection offered to Rotorua English Language Academy's students.

Very few students withdraw early and there are very few student complaints, and none noted of a serious nature. Issues are addressed in a professional and supportive manner by the principal and staff. This was confirmed by the students during interviews. Students said they felt well cared for and received appropriate information about studying in Rotorua and living in New Zealand. The evaluators noted a respectful and professional relationship between staff and students. Student comments included "the office staff do everything for us, [such as] arrang[ing] doctor's appointments for us, or ringing Immigration New Zealand".

Students are picked up from the airport or met at Rotorua English Language Academy. On their first day they have an orientation and are introduced to the other students. Students said they received a very warm welcome and in spite of thinking they would "be lonely with so many other cultures, had many friends at the end of the first week".

## **Mandatory focus area: Governance, management, and strategy**

The overall rating for performance in governance, management and strategy is **Excellent**.

The overall rating for capability in self-assessment in governance, management and strategy is **Excellent**.

### **Context**

Rotorua English Language Academy is a small organisation, and staff are consulted and involved in the improvement to its policies and procedures on an ongoing basis.

### **Explanation**

Rotorua English Language Academy governance and management is guided by documented policies and procedures that are appropriate to its size. Staff commented that they are not "driven by policy", and feel able to bring about change in order to make an improvement. The principal discussed a pragmatic approach to ensuring there were sufficient guiding policies so staff knew how to act and were clear about their responsibilities. Staff interviewed confirmed that this was the case and they were very supportive of the organisation's processes and culture of providing both clarity and responsiveness. The director, manager, and staff said that they felt the organisation was in a strong position with a good reputation in the local and international community due to its clear leadership and direction combined with the culture of consultation, openness, and the ability to make positive changes quickly.

# Statements of Confidence

*The statements of confidence are derived from the findings within and across the focus areas. A four-step scale is used: highly confident, confident, not yet confident, not confident.*

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Rotorua English Language Academy.

Key reasons are:

- In all areas within the focus of this external evaluation and review the evaluation team observed a high level of coherence in policies, planning, records, staff and student comments, and academic achievement.
- Students leave Rotorua English Language Academy having gained significant improvement in English language, and also in the social outcomes that are a focus for this organisation.
- Feedback from parents, recruitment agents, and ex-students confirms the value of the learning gained at Rotorua English Language Academy.
- Rotorua English Language Academy has chosen to seek input to its operation from three external sources: Quality English, English New Zealand, and iGraduate. The results of this input are coherent with and complementary to the findings of this external evaluation and review.
- Students commented that Rotorua English Language Academy is well resourced and staff are well supported by management.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **highly confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Rotorua English Language Academy.

Key reasons for this are:

- Rotorua English Language Academy staff are able to clearly describe what they do to review their organisation, individual programmes, student progress, stakeholder satisfaction, and their policies and procedures. These include formal and informal processes. Although not all internal reviews are carried out as planned, such as the formal annual review of policies and procedures, there were many situations where improvements have been made through informal processes.
- There was a high level of coherence between organisational policies, procedures, documents and records, staff and student comments, and observed behaviours.

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- Two external audits and student input via the iGraduate International Language Barometer confirm the organisation's internal processes and findings. Rotorua English Language Academy was rated highly in both of these audits, conducted respectively in October 2008 and May 2009. The web-based student surveys, and the iGraduate International Language Barometer provide external comparative data of student satisfaction and achievement. Rotorua English Language Academy scores are in the top quartile across most of the fields in recent iGraduate surveys.

# Actions Required and Recommendations

## Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's regular scheduling policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

## Recommendations

The evaluation team refers Rotorua English Language Academy to documents prepared by NZQA such as Using Evaluation to Strengthen Organisational Self Assessment, and Tertiary Evaluation Indicators, to support their current good practice.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E [eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz)

[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)