

Report of External Evaluation and Review

ACTS Auckland City Training School
trading as Equippers College and
Creative Learning Scheme

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 31 July 2014

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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:	ACTS Auckland City Training School trading as Equippers College and Creative Learning Scheme
Type:	Private training establishment
Location:	9 Mercury Lane, Newton, Auckland
Delivery sites:	13-15 Gladding Place, Manukau 18 Pilkington Road, Panmure, Auckland 96 Lansford Crescent, Avondale, Auckland 355 Great South Road, Papatoetoe, Manukau 520 Queen Street, Auckland Central 82 Chartwell Avenue, Glenfield, Auckland 75A Onehunga Mall, Onehunga, Auckland
First registered:	1 April 1994
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Certificate in Employment Skills (Level 1) and National Certificate in Performing Arts (Level 2)• Diploma in Pastoral Leadership (Level 5)• Certificate in Advanced Christian Ministry (Level 3)• Certificate in Christian Ministry (Applied) (Level 4)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate in Practical Ministry Skills (Level 4) • Certificate in Christian Ministry (Level 3)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes for students aged 18 years and upwards
Number of students:	<p>Domestic: 278</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equippers College: Māori 30 per cent; Pasifika 27 per cent • Creative Learning Scheme: Māori 60 per cent; Pasifika 32 per cent <p>International: four</p>
Number of staff:	47 full-time equivalents
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>ACTS is a not-for-profit private training establishment owned and run by Equippers Church. There are two distinct parts to the organisation. Equippers College, based in central Auckland, is Student Achievement Component-funded and offers Christian Ministry programmes. The Creative Learning Scheme offers a range of programmes for at-risk youth, including a Youth Guarantee programme, Alternative Education, a Youth Justice-based programme and an academy to help youth move into mainstream education.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>There have been some recent changes of leadership at Equippers College – new appointees for the roles of principal, programme director and registrar. The organisation has recently received NZQA approval to offer the National Certificate in Performing Arts (Level 2) and the Diploma in Pastoral Leadership (Level 5).</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>At the previous external evaluation and review (EER) in 2010, NZQA was Highly Confident in ACTS' educational performance and Confident in ACTS' capability in self-assessment. ACTS' national external moderation record shows that ACTS was required to submit an action plan, which was accepted by NZQA in April 2013. The most recent moderation results show that ACTS did not meet requirements for three of the six standards submitted.</p>

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER included the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy. The two programmes chosen as focus areas represented the two distinct parts of ACTS: Equippers College and the Creative Learning Scheme.

- Certificate in Christian Ministry (Level 3)

This is a key programme for Equippers College, with a significant number of enrolments, providing a foundation to higher-level programmes.

- Youth Guarantee

This programme has evolved from a Youth Training-funded programme to a qualification-focused Youth Guarantee-funded programme. This Creative Learning Scheme programme implements the new combined qualifications: the National Certificate in Employment Skills (Level 1) and the National Certificate in Performing Arts (Level 2).

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.

ACTS submitted a self-assessment summary prior to the EER, and a pre-scoping meeting was held with the lead evaluator and the outgoing principal of Equippers College.

The evaluation team of two visited the city campus and the Gladding Place campus over two days. Interviews were conducted with board members, outgoing and incoming managers from Equippers College, the principal of the Creative Learning Scheme, tutors at both sites, and students. A range of documentation was reviewed, including course evaluations, meeting minutes, moderation records, programme review documentation, graduate survey data and achievement data.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **ACTS Auckland City Training School trading as Equippers College**.

Achievement at ACTS is generally strong, with learners achieving mostly in line with or slightly above sector medians across a number of indicators.

For example, Table 1 demonstrates that course completion rates for students studying at Equippers College have been consistently above sector medians. Interim data shows that both course and qualification completion rates have improved for 2013 compared with 2010-2012.

	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)	2013 (%)*
Course completion	92	85	89	86	93
Qualification completion	92	76	79	72	90
Progression	31	25	26	28	28
Retention	62	61	70	75	74

*Data still to be finalised.

For the Youth Guarantee (Creative Learning Scheme) programme, comparative data for 2011 and 2012 shows that ACTS performed well in comparison with national averages for qualification completions and destination outcomes, but less well in credit completions. Interim data indicates that rates for qualification achievement and the number of those moving to further education or employment improved in 2013.

There is also good evidence, including individual learning plans and survey results, that learners across the organisation are achieving important learning-to-learn, leadership and other work-ready skills. These skills are important in enabling graduates to achieve positive outcomes as a result of their training, including moving to further study or employment. A graduate outcomes survey for the Christian Ministry programme showed that 85 per cent of those who responded were either in further study or employment. The evaluation team saw a range of evidence of valued outcomes for learners who study in the Creative Learning Scheme programme, including some moving to further education, improved relationships with families and improved literacy and numeracy and other essential skills.

That students are better 'equipped for life' fits with the organisation's vision, which is manifested in the values and processes that support teaching and learning across ACTS. The people in the organisation demonstrate a passion for improving the lives of learners and there is significant evidence of good, strong processes to understand learners' needs and ensure they are matched appropriately. A new performing arts programme for the Youth Guarantee students and a pre-orientation workshop for new Christian Ministry students are two examples of changes being made to respond to learner needs.

Equippers College and the Creative Learning Scheme are currently operating quite separately, and there is good practice that could be shared across the programmes. For example, the strong focus on improving teaching and learning that is evident in the Creative Learning Scheme strategic plan was not apparent for Equippers College. The tentative attempts to understand soft skills development in Equippers College students could benefit from an organisation-wide approach. It is these gaps in key processes that have guided the evaluation team to the judgement of confident for educational performance, a shift from the previous EER statement of highly confident.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **ACTS Auckland City Training School trading as Equippers College**.

The achievement of learners is being monitored at the learner, tutor and programme level. The progress of individual learners is tracked and there is a personalised approach taken to ensure learners succeed. Data is collected and collated and some analysis occurs, with comparisons made with publicly available data. A deeper analysis of achievement data and reporting of achievement to the governance team could be strengthened. For example, it was not understood how well Māori and Pasifika learners achieved in comparison with their peers at Equippers College.

A range of mechanisms is used to understand the needs of learners and other stakeholders. Examples are systematic learner evaluations, a graduate outcomes survey, a staff survey and a significant engagement with the Christian Theological and Ministries Education Society (CTMES) through the NZQA-led Targeted Review of Qualifications process. This information is used to inform review and development.

Programme review and development is occurring on an ongoing basis, with small teams of staff continuously reflecting on their practice and processes. Much of this happens in a relational way and deals with isolated aspects of the different programmes. It is not clear that programme staff come together on a regular basis to review all the component parts of programmes to plan for improvements.

It was clear that the strategic plan for the Creative Learning Scheme is a living document, with clear timeframes and personnel and performance monitoring

indicators in place. This plan has a sharp focus on improving teaching and learning and is being regularly reviewed. This in-depth and systematic planning for improvement was not as evident for Equippers College.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

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

Learners achieve well at Equippers College. Course completion rates for the Christian Ministry programme are consistently above sector averages for courses at these levels. For the Certificate in Christian Ministry, cohort data provided by the organisation shows that in 2012, 91 per cent of those who enrolled achieved the qualification, while in 2013 the figure was 100 per cent. A review of key development areas indicates that learners felt they made significant improvements in their understanding of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Bible Reading and Application.

Achievement in the Youth Guarantee programme (Creative Learning Scheme) is not as strong, but this is to be expected with a level 1-2 programme aimed at at-risk youth, a number of whom are referred from Youth Justice. In 2012, compared with sector averages, ACTS performed more strongly in qualification achievement and destination outcomes, but not as strongly in credit achievement (Table 2). Qualification completion rates for 2013 improved to 53 per cent, and 67 per cent of learners from 2013 moved to either further education or employment.

		2011	2012	2013*
Credit achievement (number)	ACTS	20.73	30.67	57% course completion
	National average	24.36	38.27	
Qualification completions (rate per student)	ACTS		.44	.53
	National average	.	.32	
Destination outcomes (rate per student)	ACTS		.39	.53 to higher education
	National average		.34	
*Interim data				

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

The evaluation team saw individual learning plans and collected stories that demonstrate that learners are achieving important social and work-ready skills. Examples include time management and planning, literacy and numeracy gains and greater awareness of financial management.

Across the organisation tutors are connected with their learners, monitoring their attendance and achievement closely and putting in place support mechanisms to enable them to achieve. Tutors and managers reflect on achievement rates and use the data to inform planning. The evaluation team noted that there are opportunities for closer analysis of the achievement data, and for reporting trends and performance against targets to senior management and the governance team to enable them to understand better how well learners achieve.

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**.

The evaluation team is confident that there is good value for learners who study with ACTS. Outcomes vary according to the programme studied. For example, a survey tracking graduates through to February 2014 indicates 47 per cent of those who graduated from Equippers College moved to further education, while 38 per cent were in full-time employment. Of those in full-time employment, 60 per cent believed their study had provided them with useful or essential skills relevant to their work. Graduates spoken to by the evaluation team attested to the value of their study in Christian Ministry, giving them study skills, confidence and leadership skills, enabling them to move to higher education. It is notable that 90 per cent of graduates were involved in volunteer work relevant to their study. All graduates considered that the training had given them knowledge and skills useful or essential to their volunteer role. The graduate survey and the interviews with graduates conducted by the evaluation team attest to learners gaining good value from their time with Equippers College.

The value for learners studying with the Youth Guarantee programme is more difficult to quantify. What is clear is that the percentage moving to either further education or employment has increased over the period 2012-13, from 39 per cent to 67 per cent. The value of the programme has also begun to be captured by the organisation through 'success stories' saved and shared in the Creative Learning Scheme database. These stories attest to learners and their whānau gaining value from the improved confidence, knowledge and skills gained while on the programme. The stories were corroborated by graduates spoken to by the evaluation team. Keeping young people engaged in education is a key goal for the Youth Guarantee programme, and 53 per cent of the 2013 learners moved to

further education, exceeding Tertiary Education Commission performance targets by more than 10 percentage points.

ACTS has made some steps to capture the value of the training for graduates. This includes the implementation of a graduate survey and the capturing of success stories. These initiatives should be continued and strengthened to better understand and thereby improve the value of the training, enhancing skills and attributes that have an impact on further study or employment.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

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

ACTS is focused on meeting the needs of learners and other stakeholders, and consequently has a range of approaches to gain feedback. At Equippers College, learners and graduates are regularly asked for feedback, and there is good evidence that this feedback is responded to. For example, in response to graduate feedback a careers workshop was developed. Over the course of the next two years, this workshop was reviewed, incorporating feedback from participants, and improvements were made. The pre-orientation workshop is another example of the organisation responding to learner needs and implementing a strategy that appears to support achievement.

To understand the needs of the sector, key staff members have been significantly involved with the Targeted Review of Qualifications, as part of the membership of CTMES. The stakeholder feedback gained as part of this process has ensured that the college has a good understanding of needs and is well positioned for the development of the new qualifications.

In the Creative Learning Scheme programme, the learners are asked for feedback through course and tutor evaluations, and these are summarised and analysed to inform staff performance appraisals and course improvements. The recently approved performing arts qualification was developed in response to discussions with learners and other stakeholders. The activities and programme are designed to keep youth engaged, and include break-out opportunities for physical activity and outings. Tutors on the Creative Learning Scheme are also cognisant of and work hard to match to the needs of government agency stakeholders, including the Tertiary Education Commission and NZQA.

The organisation as a whole is well connected with a range of community organisations including Youth Justice, youth transition agencies and the church. Across the organisation it is clear that students feel comfortable approaching tutors or management to discuss any issues they may have. Staff feedback is also sought. For example, a survey conducted in 2012 determined that while staff felt

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strongly connected with the vision of the organisation, they wanted clearer role descriptions and better remuneration. An action plan was put in place to respond to these issues and a follow-up survey is planned.

With a wide range of approaches in place to gain feedback from key stakeholders, it is clear that ACTS is an organisation that is responsive and continuously reviewing its programmes and activities to ensure they match the needs of learners, whānau, government agencies and the wider community.

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**.

Improving teaching and learning is a key feature of the strategic plan for the Creative Learning Scheme programme, and there is good evidence of targeted professional development, evidence-based performance appraisals and the monitoring of assessment data to ensure goals are reached. Learners are positive about the teaching, and the shifts in literacy and numeracy and the increase in credit and qualification achievement are indications of improved teaching effectiveness. The evaluation team saw evidence that learners are clear about their individual goals, and that feedback is targeted and useful for learning. Several strategies are used to engage learners. For example, community projects and class outings have a range of embedded literacy and numeracy tasks and activities.

External moderation reports have delivered mixed results for the Creative Learning Scheme programme, and the evaluation team saw good evidence that the organisation was responding to those results with a range of strategies. For example, regular internal moderation meetings are scheduled and tutors have been supported to undertake training and development in using unit and achievement standards. It is clear that the principal has a good understanding of how well the organisation is progressing to improve this aspect of teaching.

Teaching at Equippers College is effective and characterised by staff who are passionate about the content of programmes. Moderation has been strengthened since the previous EER, with a working relationship being formed with a similar provider to ensure there is an external perspective. It appears that this process has been worthwhile in improving the clarity of questions being asked and the criteria by which assessments are graded. Teachers reflect on their practice in response to learner feedback, and some informal peer review and observations occur.

There exists an opportunity for ACTS to share teaching and learning strategies, practices and professional development across the two parts of the organisation. For example, it is not clear in the Equippers College strategic plan how teaching will be developed. A sharing of ideas across the organisation could address this gap.

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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**.

Across the organisation, a highly relational approach to supporting students, combined with strong guidance and support processes, results in excellent guidance and support for learners.

ACTS staff are focused on ensuring learners are supported to achieve their goals. The evaluation team saw a range of strategies to support learners, including weekly tutorials, one-to-one support and pre-course and careers workshops. A range of evidence indicates that tutors relate effectively to learners and act as mentors, guiding learners to success.

For the younger learners, guidelines for successful study and rules for behaviour are clearly established through orientation and student handbooks. Students are clear about who to go to if they need further support. Management and staff follow up with learners who are not attending, and they have a good understanding of the reasons why some students are unable to continue with their studies. Staff at Creative Learning Scheme often have to deal with youth with high needs, and have ongoing professional supervision to support them in their work.

For the small number of international students that study at Equippers College, there is a separate pre-orientation meeting to ensure they are comfortable with the new study environment and are settling into their accommodation. Enrolment staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities under the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care for International Students.

The range of approaches to support and guide learners results in learners having a strong connection with the organisation, and this is reflected in strong retention rates, particularly in the Christian Ministry programmes.

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 **Good**.

The governance and management team of ACTS is committed to the vision of 'equipping learners for life'. This vision is shared across the organisation and infuses the work of the tutors, management and board. Staff feel supported by management and are comfortable raising issues. Across the organisation, management and staff are supported to engage in further education. Professional
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supervision for Creative Learning Scheme staff is another example of staff being supported. Regular staff appraisals are occurring and these appear to be evidence-based and useful for tutor development.

There was good evidence that the organisation is effective at managing change. For example, considerable work has gone into moving the youth programme from credit-based to qualification-based, including developing a new programme to better match stakeholder needs. Another example was the careful transfer of staff into key management roles that appeared planned and staged to ensure effective continuity of processes.

Equippers College and ACTS develop separate strategic plans and report separately to the board. Given the very different nature of the programmes delivered, this is appropriate, although the evaluation team did feel that some opportunities for sharing of ideas and knowledge were being missed. While the board is clearly committed to the vision, it was not evident that governance had a clear picture of what excellent educational performance across these two parts of the organisation would look like.

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 **Good**.

2.2 Focus area: Certificate in Christian Ministry (Level 3)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Creative Learning Scheme – Youth Guarantee

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:

- Opportunities are created to share expertise across the organisation.
- The board is provided with performance information that includes analysed and benchmarked achievement outcomes data.
- Equippers College strengthen planning for improving teaching and learning.

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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