

Report of External Evaluation and Review

ABC College of English

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 11 July 2012

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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:	ABC College of English (ABC)
Type:	Private training establishment
Location:	10 Man Street, Queenstown
Delivery sites:	One
First registered:	1 April 1994
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General English• English Plus• International English Examinations Preparation
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: nil International: approximately 18-20 equivalent full-time students (approximately 150 individual students)
Number of staff:	Six full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General English• English Plus• International English Examinations Preparation
Distinctive characteristics:	ABC is a member of English New Zealand, an organisation representing a number of English language providers. Members are required to

meet a set of the organisation's own standards for the teaching of English.

Recent significant changes: N/A

Previous quality assurance history: The NZQA quality audit in 2008 found that ABC met all but one requirement of the then standard, relating to financial reporting. ABC met all requirements of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code).

The English New Zealand audit in 2009 found that ABC met all standards.

Other: ABC is approved under the Code for the enrolment of students under 18 years of age.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review included:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- International student support
- General English

The first two focus areas are mandatory. General English is the core programme.

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.

A team of two evaluators visited ABC over two days. Interviews were held with the principal, the director of studies, the student service manager, three tutors, seven current students, and two past students. Telephone interviews were also conducted with the owner, two homestay parents, and one agent. A wide range of documents, records, and other resources was sighted and reviewed.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **ABC College of English**.

There is good evidence that ABC is effective in meeting the varied needs, both academic and pastoral, of its learners. The majority of ABC enrol for short periods (between two and ten weeks) to improve their knowledge and use of the English language for work and travel purposes. A small number of students enrol in examination preparation courses (12 weeks) or enrol for longer periods, to prepare for external examinations (Cambridge English: First (FCE) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS)), which enable them to meet the entry requirements for further study or to enhance their employment prospects in their home country. Sports enthusiasts and occasional groups of under 18-year-olds are also attracted to the opportunity to combine language learning with a wide variety of outdoor and leisure activities in the Queenstown area.

Student assessment records provide reliable evidence of individual learners achieving improvements in their knowledge and use of English, measured by their progression through the language programme and performance in weekly course tests and six-weekly standardised international proficiency tests. Results for external examinations such as IELTS or FCE, for the very small number of students who attempt them, reflect the effectiveness of the exam preparation course, and evidence was provided of a number of these students progressing to further study. ABC's understanding of educational performance could be strengthened, for example by comparisons between proficiency at graduation with the starting level or (in the case of examination students) between examination results and the target agreed at enrolment. There was some information on the usefulness of the enhanced English skills for work and travel from a variety of sources, including verbal feedback from past students, Facebook messages and postcards, and agent correspondence.

Students at ABC benefit from an integrated approach to academic and pastoral care and a high level of individualised support which contribute significantly to the achievement of their learning goals and satisfaction with their learning experience. The size of the school is limited to maintain small class sizes which enable individual attention to be given. Structured academic and administrative processes and day-to-day communication practices ensure there are many formal and informal opportunities to assess individual learner needs and respond to their feedback. These include monthly written evaluations and scheduled conversations with tutors, as well as regular observations and casual engagement with management or support staff on a day-to-day basis and during whole-of-school activities. Examples were provided of careful monitoring and follow-up by staff to ensure the social integration and well-being of individual students. ABC is also effective in ensuring the students achieve valued outcomes such as gaining confidence and increased independence and greater knowledge about other

cultures, as well as a positive experience of the New Zealand way of life. A supportive and inclusive learning environment is complemented by a well-managed homestay programme and support for travel and social activities.

Staff at ABC are all well qualified and experienced and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and agreed procedures. As a result, they work very effectively as a team in delivering academic and support services, and students are receiving prompt and consistent advice and support at all stages, from first enquiry to follow-up after course completion.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

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

Educational performance at ABC is effectively managed through close monitoring of the academic progress of each individual student and weekly adjustments to teaching plans, which create a targeted language programme. ABC focuses many of its self-assessment processes on optimising the individual learning experience and well-being of its learners. Teaching records and resource materials reflect the effectiveness of this approach in accommodating the interests and needs of course participants, and results in learners achieving steady improvements in English language knowledge and skills. ABC staff regularly seek and analyse student feedback to inform changes across the organisation, such as improvements recently made to the Friday activities programme. Student evaluations of all aspects of their learning programme are also collated and reviewed both monthly and annually, and learner outcomes and satisfaction are tracked to measure the impact on the learners when, for example, additional training and support is provided to individual staff.

ABC has effective self-assessment practices appropriate for a small provider which are based on an established culture of reflection and involve all staff. This information is sourced formally (from questionnaires or structured record-keeping) and informally (from verbal feedback, teacher observations, or emails). The evaluators found evidence of a high level of day-to-day responsiveness as well as an annual review process that incorporates many important aspects of the organisation, including academic matters, homestay services, administration, and student feedback. Examples of meaningful improvements resulting in positive impacts on learners were available at the evaluation visit. However, the process does not include a specific review of overall learner achievement for the previous 12 months to identify trends and benchmarks. While there are challenges in collating meaningful achievement information for such a diverse learner cohort, there would be some value in identifying indicators of learner achievement which would provide additional evidence of ABC's overall educational performance.

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**.

Learner achievement at ABC is good overall, taking into account the learners varied learning objectives. The majority of students (approximately 90 per cent) enrol to improve their communications English for travel and work. They are also seeking a positive learning experience and immersion in the New Zealand way of life (including access to leisure and outdoor activities), new friendships, and increased confidence. Evidence was found that, in this context, ABC is performing well. Student assessment and internal moderation records provide reliable evidence that learners are achieving meaningful improvements in their knowledge and use of English, measured by their progression through the language programmes and performance in weekly class tests and six-weekly standardised proficiency tests. Equally important was the evidence of the improvements in students' confidence, levels of independence, and well-being, especially for those students for whom this programme represented their first exposure to international study. Student and agent feedback confirmed these learner outcomes, including a greater understanding of other cultures, and friendships which had enriched their lives. The evaluators saw evidence of students achieving IELTS or FCE results which had enabled them to progress to further study. Although this pathway is accessed by only a few of ABC's students, this evidence of learner achievement would be strengthened by comparing final results achieved with targets set at enrolment.

Academic progress and personal development is carefully tracked at an individual level through a systematic process. Language improvement is monitored through weekly testing focussed on the target language for the previous week, six-weekly tests (Oxford proficiency tests), and four-weekly progress reports by the teacher (covering all aspects of English language learning). While ABC targets progression through the language levels within 12 weeks, because the majority of students are enrolled for shorter periods there is limited opportunity to use this benchmark for measuring educational performance. Instead, ABC uses staged texts to continuously evaluate learner achievement. The validity of learner achievement information is underpinned by robust assessment practices including regular internal moderation and the use of international standardised tests. Consistency with the wider English language sector is sought by compliance with English New

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

Zealand Standards through three-yearly audits. At the most recent audit in 2009, ABC met all standards.

ABC has access to a wide range of sources of information about other aspects of learner achievement and personal development. These include the student diaries (which are marked three times a week by tutors), learner feedback forms and progress interviews (which occur every four weeks), records of end-of-course evaluations, graduation speeches, and unsolicited feedback from past students and agents. The evaluators sighted written evidence and heard feedback from past students which attested to their achievement of individual aspirations, such as learning about New Zealand and other cultures and increased confidence and independence.

There are challenges for ABC in collating meaningful learner achievement data which arises from the characteristics of its student population (primarily language and leisure students, enrolled for between two and ten weeks). However, analysis of aggregated data on learner progression, such as comparing proficiency scores at enrolment and graduation, would provide useful objective evidence of educational performance which would complement the comprehensive learner satisfaction data that is already accessed and analysed to identify trends and improvements.

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**.

ABC is effective in ensuring the students achieve valued outcomes. The students' improved English language knowledge and skills are useful, particularly for the travel and work aspirations of the majority of the students. Past students described using their improved ability to communicate in English with New Zealanders and other travellers, or to communicate with supervisors or customers in their workplace. The evaluators met other students for whom enhanced English ability was either necessary or would be an advantage for them in their employment at home (such as in the pharmaceutical or travel industries), and this was confirmed by students in emails and on Facebook, and by agents' correspondence. For the small number of students who enrol for exam preparation at ABC, the achievement of IELTS or FCE results scores have enabled them to proceed to higher study. On the completion of their enrolment, all students participate in a graduation ceremony and receive an attendance certificate and a final report covering all English language skills. This provides evidence for parents or employers of the student's level of engagement with the programme and their learning achievements.

Other outcomes that are highly valued by students and other stakeholders are increased confidence and independence, which are fostered by a supportive and inclusive learning environment, friendly and accessible staff, and comprehensive

information and support. The high quality homestay programme also provides students with a positive introduction to the New Zealand way of life, and the opportunity to develop friendships with students from other cultures is also appreciated. Repeat business from a stable pool of long-standing recruitment agents and the very positive feedback sighted during the evaluation visit confirm the value of ABC's attention to ensuring both language acquisition and positive social outcomes for the learners.

ABC's location in Queenstown, which is a main tourist centre providing access to many outdoor and recreational activities, is valued by those students seeking to combine language learning with leisure and travel. ABC contributes to the local community, placing most of its students in homestays with families who appreciate the opportunities for cultural exchange, or occasionally referring students to local employers who are seeking staff.

ABC accesses information on graduate destinations and outcomes from a variety of sources. These include emails or postcards from students, agents, and parents, or meetings with past students during off-shore marketing trips. More recently, an increasing number of students are maintaining contact with ABC via Facebook. This information is regularly shared among the staff, but is largely informal and unsolicited. More reliable and comprehensive information could be available if it was systematically recorded and included regular surveys of agents.

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**.

ABC is highly effective in providing a learning environment and support services that meet the needs of the learners. The morning programme is based on a course book with clearly defined outcomes, standards of achievement, and timeframes. The afternoon programme is topic-based and special attention is paid to New Zealand content. An English-only rule ensures that students gain plenty of opportunities to practice when on site. The size of the school is limited to maintain small class sizes which enable individual attention to be given. All students are known by staff, who engage regularly with them in common spaces and during the Friday activities. This ensures that students' questions or issues are addressed at an early stage.

ABC has well-established processes which ensure that each new student is well supported as they integrate into Queenstown and the college. These processes include an airport meet-and-greet process and welcome pack, introduction to the homestay family, and the first-day placement interview and orientation. The college pays particular attention to establishing the study goals of each individual. A 'buddy' system assists new learners to settle into the environment and begin to

build relationships. This welcoming approach is extended to the classroom where teaching plans and strategies are well suited to accommodating the rolling intakes and changing class composition. These processes all contribute to accepting and supporting the varied goals and aspirations of learners regardless of their length of enrolment.

A policy of rotating teachers through the levels every 12 weeks has been established at ABC to provide variety for the students in terms of teaching styles and approaches. ABC has invested in New Zealand teaching resources and provides a variety of opportunities for students to engage with the local community, including the homestay experience. New Zealand culture and customs are also reflected in the content of the formal teaching programme and the choice of Friday activities.

ABC has a stated goal of 'exceeding student expectations' and is particularly effective in collecting and using student feedback to target its activities and services. Feedback processes include formal four-weekly questionnaires and interviews and an exit survey. In addition, there are multiple opportunities for students to ask staff for additional assistance or information. The findings of the formal questionnaires are collated and analysed and used to identify improvements such as changes made to the organisation of the activity programme. Student ideas are also sought for the topic-based afternoon programme, and this has resulted recently in the introduction of an environmental topic. ABC has also begun to use student focus groups as a mechanism for collecting student input. This approach has been used to identify improvements to one of the regular school excursions.

The evaluators found evidence that ABC is also very effective in meeting the needs of agents, parents, and homestay families, particularly in maintaining high levels of communication and information sharing. This includes comprehensive information on the school, regular updates on student progress, and prompt follow-up on any issues or problems.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Learners at ABC benefit from highly effective teaching characterised by an emphasis on individual attention and responsiveness. This ensures that all students make progress towards their study goals, regardless of the length of their enrolment. While the curriculum is based on standard English language texts, the teaching plans are regularly adjusted to accommodate the system of rolling intakes and graduations to ensure the needs of all students are met, and are also informed by the outcomes of weekly tests. These, together with the results of the six-weekly proficiency tests, teacher observations recorded in the weekly class register, and the four-weekly student interviews are used to establish learner progression

through the language levels. If necessary, teachers will provide additional assistance to individual students.

ABC has appropriate systems for ensuring the quality of its teaching materials and assessments. The evaluators sighted evidence of systematic internal moderation of the weekly tests, which ensures the appropriateness of the tests for the targeted learning outcomes and the consistency of assessment practice. The use of a staged text and a standardised international proficiency test at initial placement and every six weeks provide useful benchmarks for assuring educational standards. ABC has not recently participated in any regular external moderation, apart from audits against the English New Zealand Standards, the most recent being in 2009. External sampling and review of materials and assessments, which is provided for in ABC's quality management system but has not been undertaken for some years, could be useful for validating standards and ensuring consistency over time.

All sources of evidence confirm that students at ABC enjoy good relationships with their teachers and are engaged with their learning. An inclusive learning environment and a variety of classroom activities and outings encourage learner participation and result in increased confidence. These activities are supplemented by regular homework and other opportunities for the students to use their English in their homestay or during Friday activities. The student diary is a useful tool for teachers, providing important information not only on language skills but also about the students' wider experiences and well-being.

Effective teaching is supported by the recruitment of well-qualified tutors with experience in New Zealand and overseas, and a collegial and professional culture. Regular communication and sharing of ideas and resources reflect a strong commitment to reflective practices. Monthly evaluations by students, which include an assessment of the quality of teaching, are used systematically to identify teacher strengths and weaknesses. Regular teaching observations by peers and by the director of studies provide opportunities for constructive feedback. This information contributes to professional conversations, annual performance appraisals, and teacher development plans. One tutor noted that her student evaluations had improved significantly as a result of ongoing professional development, including the completion of a CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) qualification. Shared professional development has recently been undertaken with other local language schools, and in-house workshops are delivered from time to time, such as a recent session on the use of the internet in the classroom.

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**.

Students at ABC are well supported by comprehensive systems and practices that provide a high level of individual support, both academic and pastoral.

Comprehensive placement testing and interviewing ensure students are placed at the right level and in a class that will enable them to achieve their study goals.

Effective mechanisms are in place for identifying student needs and issues and follow-up activities, which involve staff across the organisation. These include regular opportunities for students to discuss their progress and for teachers to review their programmes to maintain student motivation and interests, through changes to their curriculum or classroom activities. Student achievements are celebrated at the weekly graduations.

Learners enjoy the benefits of a small school that fosters personal relationships with staff in a variety of settings. Different cultural needs are accommodated (such as providing a prayer room for Islamic students), and individual interests are supported (through the provision of additional information on outdoor and recreational activities), and these contribute to an inclusive and supportive environment. Learners have regular opportunities to provide feedback. ABC has been routinely achieving more than the target of 80 per cent student satisfaction for all aspects measured in the monthly student evaluation, and as a result the internal target has now been increased to 90 per cent. Examples of improvements made in response to the systematic analysis of this data include a review of the afternoon programme, changes to the Friday activities programme, and the purchase of up-to-date texts.

ABC is compliant with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, ensuring all staff are aware of their obligations and regularly reviewing processes and information for students. Additional measures for safety and supervision are in place, as required by the Code, for those learners who are under 18 years of age, including regular communication with parents. Student attendance is monitored carefully (it is currently tracking close to 100 per cent), and absences are followed up promptly. Students who need additional assistance may be referred to a same-language counsellor. These activities all ensure that international students are receiving appropriate levels of guidance and support.

ABC has a successful homestay programme which is the preferred accommodation for many students. A stable pool of homestay families has been carefully selected and vetted and ABC maintains close contact with these families, before, during, and following student placements. Students complete homestay surveys each month and at the end of their stay. Their comments, together with the results of the annual survey of homestay families, are useful for future student placements and have recently lead to improvements in homestay documentation.

The quality of the overall experience for students at ABC is enhanced by the attention paid to creating a sense of belonging and community. The evaluators found that the social integration of students and their well-being is monitored by staff and regularly reviewed at the weekly staff meetings. Agent and student feedback attested to the importance of this supportive context in fostering learner achievement and personal development.

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**.

ABC's self-assessment practices are embedded in business as usual and are based on valid information from a variety of sources. All staff are involved in annual reviews of many important aspects of the organisation, including academic matters (resources, curriculum, documentation, and student records), homestay services, administration, and student feedback. ABC has detailed records, dating back to 2002, of learner feedback which has been collated, analysed, and used for improvement. Curriculum changes in 2009 and associated improvements to teaching materials the following year arose from this process, and in 2011 increased ratings for teaching resources and levels of learner engagement were able to be tracked to these improvements.

Understanding how well students are meeting their goals is based on day-to-day monitoring activities, weekly meetings, and a focus on individuals. Reflection on overall learner achievement is not currently included in the annual review process. While there are challenges in collating meaningful achievement information for such a diverse learner cohort, there would be some value in identifying indicators of learner achievement which would provide additional evidence of ABC's overall educational performance.

There is a high level of support from management and governance for ABC staff, who work very effectively as a team. Communication practices are open and staff input into all processes and decisions is valued. Roles and responsibilities are well understood and reinforced by staff and office manuals which are regularly updated. The manager provides leadership for the educational and marketing activities of ABC and has regular contact with the off-site owner, providing regular business updates. ABC's approach to business planning and resource allocation is well organised and appropriate, and includes the appointment and support of qualified and experienced teachers and the provision of high-standard facilities and up-to-date teaching resources. Membership of English New Zealand fosters ABC's ability to respond to change, providing an external reference group for sharing best practice and identifying improvements. The organisational culture is positive and professional and aligned to the special character and vision of the school, which includes a maximum of 43 students on site at any one time. As a result, students

at ABC benefit from a coherent and organised approach to supporting their learning and well-being, ensuring they have a positive New Zealand experience.

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: 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**.

2.3 Focus area: General English

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

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those expressed or implied within the report.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of programme approval and accreditation (under sections 249 and 250 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Programmes established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act and published in the Gazette of 28 July 2011 at page 3207. These policies and criteria are deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under the new section 253.

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 programmes they own or provide. These criteria and policies are also deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under section 253. Section 233B(1) of the Act requires registered PTEs to comply with these rules.

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 EER process approved by the NZQA Board.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>

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