

Report of External Evaluation and Review

ABC College of English

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 14 August 2014

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Final Report

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 (PTE)
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, for students aged 14-17 and 18 years and upwards
Number of students:	Domestic: nil International: approximately 20-25 equivalent full-time students, with rolling Monday enrolments (2012 – 136 students; 2013 – 159 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 teaching English.

The majority of ABC students enrol for short periods (between two and 10 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 enables them to meet the entry requirements for further study or to enhance their employment prospects in their home countries.

Recent significant changes: A change of ownership due to retirement was completed in March 2014, with 100 per cent shareholding going to the new owner. ABC requested that the external evaluation and review (EER) be undertaken once the new ownership had been formalised.

Previous quality assurance history: The NZQA EER in July 2012 found ABC to be Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment. The English New Zealand audit in 2013 found that ABC met all standards. (One tutor did not have the required supervised teaching hours, and arrangements were made to meet this requirement, but the tutor left ABC's employment, thereby resolving this issue.)

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER 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-eeer/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 services manager, tutors and current and past students. Telephone interviews were held with several homestay parents and the liaison person at Queenstown Resort College. A wide range of documents, records and other resources were sighted and reviewed, including the comprehensive self-assessment summary.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

Overall, the evidence indicates that students markedly improve their English language skills while at ABC College of English.

- ABC has well-researched key performance indicators (KPIs) that provide baseline measurements of individual and group progress over time. The KPI of pass rates of 60 per cent or more in both the weekly and six-weekly formal standardised level tests was met by both short-term and long-term students in 2012 and 2013. These results indicate that learners' skills and competencies at each General English level consistently improve.
- Over 2012 and 2013, all ABC students enrolled in the Cambridge FCE examinations passed, and all but one of the IELTS students achieved or exceeded their IELTS goals.
- Tutors at ABC are highly qualified and experienced. They impressed the evaluation team as enthusiastic, knowledgeable and student-centred. They work very effectively as a team in delivering academic and support services. Students receive prompt and consistent advice from first enquiry to course completion. Graduates also pathway to higher qualifications and employment, indicating that ABC is meeting the range of student needs well.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

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

Overall, ABC College of English's self-assessment practice is distinguished by its excellent monitoring of learner results, measured through internal KPIs, and, in the case of the examination students, benchmarked against national and international patterns.

- ABC has a clear strategic vision and meets its mission: 'To provide a teaching and learning environment of the highest quality in which students from overseas can improve their communicative English language skills'.
- ABC has a comprehensive set of measures and standards for self-review. These include regular consultation with learners, agents, homestay parents and staff, and relevant industry research. These measures provide feedback to the school and identify areas for improvement. The outcomes of these reviews consistently show that the learning environment at ABC is well organised and meets the needs of all stakeholders.

- Formal reviews are supplemented by less formal daily interactions where students' academic and pastoral care issues are consistently monitored by staff, and any changes in student behaviour are identified and managed promptly and appropriately.
- Staff are supported by a dynamic governance and management team that is highly responsive to students and staff. The new owner/director has worked at ABC in an academic role, understands the wider English language school environment well, and skilfully supports and extends the individual and collective expertise of staff.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Most students enrol at ABC for short periods in General English courses, in order to improve their language skills and competence.

Course completion rates for these students, as well as for those enrolled in longer periods of study, have been close to 100 per cent. Achievement is measured through a system of ongoing weekly and six-weekly testing. An internal target, set by reference to industry progression norms, aims to have students achieve above 60 per cent in the formal tests, which measure mastery of the language. Over the past two years, ABC students have consistently exceeded this target, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. General English achievement rates, 2012-2013		
Percentage of students achieving above the KPI of 60%	2012	2013
Students studying less than 12 weeks	85%	97%
Students studying more than 12 weeks	79%	83%

These figures indicate that ABC General English students make excellent progress in improving their English language skills, at a rate appropriate to their chosen period of enrolment, and in accordance with the main objective of their study, which is the acquisition of communicative English to a level sufficient to manage travel and everyday usage.

International examination results for 2012 and 2013 showed that all Cambridge FCE students passed and that all IELTS students, except one, either achieved or exceeded their IELTS exam goals, and that these pass rates were significantly above New Zealand and international averages. Students wanting residency permits had these granted after achieving the required IELTS score band. Students are well prepared for exams by having clear targets set at enrolment, and through the use of 'mock' exams and continuous self-review of progress. However,

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

it is important to note that students undertaking examinations make up a small number of those enrolled at ABC.

Graduates gain employment, engage with further study, and contribute to the local economy. In 2012 and 2013, all students with further study goals in New Zealand went on to study at local and national tertiary institutions. All students on working holiday visas who sought employment in 2012 and 2013 also found work on completion of their course.

All learners have individual learning plans, and at any time a tutor has detailed knowledge of their goals and progress against them. The results of the weekly and six-weekly tests are discussed with each student individually, and new agreed goals are formulated. Students self-assess on the monthly progress reports and also evaluate their tutor and class materials each month.

Academic and other progress is recorded in each student's monthly report and in the final report that he or she receives at graduation. This information is thoroughly reviewed and analysed as General English students make up the majority of ABC's enrolments.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

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

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

Learners use their English to achieve their goal of travelling in New Zealand and Australia, securing work in New Zealand, gaining residency, achieving internationally recognised English language proficiency certificates (Cambridge FCE, IELTS), and gaining entry to diploma courses at New Zealand tertiary institutions.

Learners interact with the local community through excursions and visits to local sites, surveys of the local community, and visits by community members to the school. These interactions add value to the students and the Queenstown community by integrating local community activities into the business of the school.

The Queenstown community, including ABC homestay families, value the opportunity to share the New Zealand experience and to develop international friendships. The deliberate cultural mix in the school adds value as students make friends with students from other nationalities. The advantage of shared cultural understanding is often highlighted in graduation speeches. Agent reputations can be enhanced when high levels of satisfaction are reported by the students they have enrolled at ABC. While marketing is always important, word-of-mouth recommendations have led to ongoing enrolments, sometimes from siblings of graduates, notably when parents see results and value for money.

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Many students extend their stay at ABC beyond their initial enrolment period, indicating satisfaction with the courses and teaching offered. There was a 10 percentage point increase in students extending their course beyond their enrolment period, from 13 per cent in 2012 to 23 per cent in 2013. Some students also return for further study. In addition, ABC offers ongoing support to students whose goal is to continue to study at a secondary or tertiary institution in New Zealand, even after they have completed their courses at ABC.

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**.

In 2012 and 2013 there was a 99 per cent overall satisfaction rating for General English classes, well above the 90 per cent the ABC KPI established for overall student satisfaction. Students' needs and goals are identified at entry by assessment, questionnaires and interviews. Learners appreciate the small classes and amount of individual attention received. ABC also has a work placement service for students on working holiday visas. In 2012 and 2013 there was 100 per cent success with placements.

Students' increase in confidence and communicative abilities is evidenced by participation in class and extracurricular activities and by daily conversations with other students and staff. Learner goals are consistently set and progress towards achieving them is closely monitored and reported.

Programmes are highly responsive, flexible and well-resourced to meet students' needs. Topics studied are correlated to the students' goals, such as the opportunity to travel and undertaking English language job interviews. This practice enhances relevant language skills. Additionally, students have input into the options for the Friday activities programme, which has led to greater student participation.

Morning and afternoon class teachers discuss how well students are settling in and pass on observations informally throughout a student's study. These daily observations are supplemented by weekly staff meetings where any issues regarding students' learning are discussed, agreed actions initiated, and subsequently reviewed in a process of ongoing self-assessment

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**.

In 2013 there was a 93 per cent satisfaction rating on quality of teaching in the monthly student evaluations. This was mirrored by teachers self-reporting high levels of job satisfaction in annual performance reviews. Annual reviews of tutor performance include an hour-long conversation with the director of studies following the observation of a class. The reviews also provide an opportunity to share and set new goals. The director of studies is highly qualified and attends external professional development workshops when possible. Peer observations of other tutors and director of studies observations are also ongoing throughout the year, and the feedback received is comprehensive and practical.

The staff work together collaboratively and focus on doing the best possible job for the students, including giving them lots of homework. Collegial discussion is ongoing and comprehensive. Internal professional development opportunities are made available each month, such as on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and how the weekly tests align with CEFR. This standardisation has made assessments more relevant and more closely related to the teaching. All teacher resources are now computerised and final student reports (received at graduation) relate to the CEFR bands, providing an external standardised measure of a student's proficiency level.

Regular internal moderation of weekly assessments and assessment criteria for writing and speaking have been standardised for each English level class. Mock exam practice tests have been good indicators of FCE and IELTS exam results, indicating students are being well prepared for these examinations.

While there have been ongoing robust internal reviews of materials and assessments, and a positive English New Zealand audit in 2013, the evaluators agree with the 2012 EER finding that external moderation could be more developed. There is already considerable cooperation between local language schools around joint marketing initiatives. Perhaps cooperation around external moderation would further assure the quality and consistency of the teaching and learning.

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**.

Comprehensive and timely support and advice is given to learners. Detailed pre-arrival information is followed by a comprehensive induction and welcome pack

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when students are met at the airport. This has significantly reduced transit and arrival problems. There are over 70 active homestay families, and written feedback from these families and phone interviews clearly showed the positive impact of student interaction and cultural exchange with their family.

Students are placed in appropriate English level classes after initial testing and interviews.

All staff are responsive to the students' various pastoral care needs. They get to know the students well and actively intervene if they notice any change in attitude or deterioration in academic performance. Extra learning support is offered to students whose performance indicates a possible learning difficulty. Any issues arising are reported to the student services manager who follows up and tries to resolve them. Students willingly seek him out to talk things through, and mentioned how important this support had been for them personally and academically.

Other support is offered by a buddy system for new students, first language counsellors, posts on Facebook (including photos of shared group activities), and feedback from quarterly focus groups with students. There is a strict attendance policy, ensuring students and teachers are not interrupted by late-comers. The Queenstown community is oriented to the international market and is very welcoming to international students. The school has built relationships with community organisations and can sometimes gain discounted access for students to some events and activities.

Self-assessment at ABC is thorough and attentive to detail. There are regular reviews of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International students, and monthly formal interviews with students where guidance is given. The school also supports students through the provision of wheelchair access and a prayer space for Muslim students.

Students reported a 99 per cent satisfaction rating for the orientation programme and 100 per cent satisfaction with student services in 2012 and 2013, further exceeding the revised 90 per cent target.

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 strategic plan is a living document and the management team works collegially to ensure input through a range of regular, formal meetings. The development of a new role for the director that incorporates aspects of the previous leadership and a renewed focus on marketing is an important aspect of the new strategic direction. The change of ownership also means the director is on site, and this has led to

moving business supports (accountant, lawyer, information technology) from Auckland to Queenstown. The new director has taught at the school and is an experienced ESOL practitioner, aiding credibility with staff. She has previous business experience and management qualifications and can use her local contacts for governance advice. This also means that the director of studies can receive face-to-face support from the new owner on a daily basis and that all the management is now in Queenstown.

Staff feedback to management is valued. There is an open-door policy for staff to discuss issues with management, annual reporting and recommendations for development that are taken to the board, daily informal discussions between staff and management, and a culture of self-review where staff collectively ask, 'How can we do things better?'

The new owner at ABC balances innovation and continuity by continuing the good practices established over the years, such as supporting and consulting with the long-serving staff before changes are made in resourcing decisions, and by anticipating and responding to change. For example, future enrolments are regularly monitored to ensure staff and resource capacity is appropriate for changes in student numbers. Consideration is also given to industry trends and available resources to ensure that proposed initiatives will have long-term benefit and are cost effective. For example, in response to a survey of agents, ABC is currently updating its website and promotional material.

Self-assessment at ABC is ongoing, comprehensive and authentic and leads to worthwhile improvements. There are systems for gathering feedback from students and key stakeholders. All key areas of college operations are analysed and recommendations for developments and improvements made and acted on. Changes made as a result of outcomes of self-assessment processes are tracked and reviewed in a cycle of continuous improvement.

Self-assessment has been strengthened by the annual academic self-review, including measurements against ABC internal KPIs, benchmarking of exam results with national and international averages, monitoring of student achievement against class averages, tracking of class averages within each General English level over time, and analysing feedback on the overall quality of the students' learning experience.

It is too early to know whether the strategic direction chosen will open new markets and improve student numbers. However, ABC has experienced, committed staff, a highly capable director of studies, an enthusiastic new owner/director and a successful track record, all of which are strong indicators of continued success.

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: 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**.

2.3 Focus area: IELTS preparation

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that ABC College of English consider developing external moderation opportunities with local or English New Zealand language schools as a way to assure greater consistency of assessment.

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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