



Report of External Evaluation and Review

The Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre of NZ (OPC)

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 23 August 2011

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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

Location:	Tongariro National Park
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1994
Number of students:	Domestic: 14 Signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. International: nil
Number of staff:	33 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	OPC offers two full-time courses: a 34-week Certificate in Outdoor Adventure Skills and Leadership (Level 4), and a 35-week National Diploma in Outdoor Recreation (Instruction) (Level 5). Other courses offered are a 12-week Certificate in Outdoor Education (Level 3) and numerous short courses for secondary school groups or corporate clients.
Sites:	Auckland (head office), Tongariro, and Great Barrier Island.
Distinctive characteristics:	OPC provides outdoor instructor training on site at its outdoor education centre in Tongariro.
Recent significant changes:	The organisation was restructured in 2010 and its administration services relocated to Auckland. A new senior management team has been developed consisting of the chief executive and education and safety manager (based in Auckland), sales and marketing manager,

events manager, the Tongariro centre manager, and the Great Barrier Island centre manager.

Previous quality assurance history:

OPC has had its assessment activities and guidelines approved by the standard-setting body, Skills Active. It is currently in an ongoing process with Skills Active to ensure the quality of assessment decisions is maintained. OPC has met NZQA external moderation requirements.

At the previous quality assurance visit by NZQA in 2007, the organisation did not meet two requirements of the quality standard then in force. Specifically, these requirements were in relation to study permits for one of the three students not being on file and information on driving rules in New Zealand not being available to international students. The other requirement not met related to lack of a formal process documented in the quality management system for monitoring and evaluating education delivered by other training providers on behalf of OPC.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The external evaluation and review focussed on the following programmes offered by OPC:

- Certificate in Outdoor Education (Level 3)
- Certificate in Outdoor Adventure Skills and Leadership (Level 4).

The following two mandatory focus areas were also included:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- International student support.

OPC also offers a National Diploma in Outdoor Education (Leadership) (Level 5), which was reviewed in this EER as part of the level 4 certificate.

The EER did not focus on the week-long courses for secondary schools, except where information about staff selection and the training programmes selected overlapped.

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 external evaluation and review was conducted over two days at the organisation's Tongariro site. The evaluation team consisted of two evaluators who spoke with the chief executive, the Tongariro centre manager, business development manager, current students, graduates of the diploma and level 4 certificates, and staff at the centre. Further information was also gained from phone conversations with two board members, a local raft guide employer, and a secondary school outdoor education coordinator.

The team reviewed information in documents contained in the organisation's own safety reports, external safety audits, secondary education programme review, and the organisation's internal moderation plan.

The Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre of NZ (OPC) has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **The Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre of NZ (OPC)**.

Successful completions rates for local qualifications over the past three years are around 75 per cent for both the level 4 certificate and the level 5 diploma in outdoor education which is high in relation to national qualification achievements.

Graduate records show that most gain employment in the outdoor education sector as outdoor instructors, leaders, or guides. This indicates that courses are teaching trainee instructors the skills required by industry. This is supported by the OPC learning environment as it provides outdoor instructor training on site at its outdoor education centre in Tongariro, providing trainee instructors with practical, hands-on learning experiences.

OPC has been reviewing its level 4 and 5 local qualifications, to align its training programme and qualifications to the industry's outdoor instructor standards and the national qualifications administered by Skills Active and New Zealand Outdoors Instructors association (NZOIA). This process will enable students' outcomes to be better recognised by the outdoor industry.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) performance data for 2009 shows that OPC has achieved a high rate of successful trainee course completion (90 per cent). However, the TEC qualification achievement rate shows 26 per cent. This is because of a database reporting error. OPC's records show that 82 per cent achieved the level 3 certificate, and 80 per cent achieved the level 4 certificate and the level 5 diploma. These figures have remained stable over the past three years. OPC is working together with the TEC to ensure that the reporting of national qualification outcomes and the TEC performance data reports are accurate.

The participation rates in the level 3 certificate have been steadily decreasing because of funding and the ability of teachers to take time out to attend the current three month long programme. OPC believes that the secondary school teachers and other outdoor educators that this programme was originally intended for value the programme, and it wants to see how it can better meet the needs of this sector.

As well as providing tertiary qualifications, OPC is known for providing highly valued outdoor education courses for many secondary schools in New Zealand. The courses are valued for developing students' outdoor skills in bush craft and leadership, as well for building students' self- confidence, which is seen in their improved application in other subjects at school. Feedback gathered by the organisation from secondary schools following each course shows that OPC is strongly meeting the needs of secondary schools in this way. In addition, students are able to achieve unit standards toward NCEA qualifications.

OPC is very supportive of trainees. It provides strong support and guidance while undertaking outdoor activities. This has been enhanced with the rigorous audit of safety systems over the past three years, and by outdoor instructors taking ownership of their own safety, as well as better training by the organisation in these systems. Evidence of the high safety standards was sighted in recent internal and external independent safety reports.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **The Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre of NZ (OPC)**.

OPC has undertaken numerous reviews of its safety systems and practices, both internally and externally, over the last three years, and this has led to the embedding of a safety culture where everyone takes responsibility, resulting in the high rating of safety standards in the industry report. The organisation is now focussed on aligning its qualifications to meet newly developed industry standards. OPC is also preparing for the sector-wide qualification review that will take place over 2011-12. The main purpose of this is to align all outdoor education qualifications for the industry.

OPC is operating a schedule of self-assessment and has reviewed and developed many underlying policies and practices to ensure the training is effective since the restructure at the end of 2010, such as internal moderation of assessment and staff professional development.

In addition, the organisation intends to develop a better understanding of the value of the programmes through the introduction of a new data-handling system. This aims to connect data on programme outcomes with feedback from all three sites for more up-to-date analysis and reporting. Currently, information from each course is analysed to identify any issues such as low course completion or trainee satisfaction rates and how to address this.

TEO response

The report has been accepted by the TEO.

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**.

The TEC performance data for 2009 shows that OPC has achieved a high rate of successful trainee course completion (90 per cent). However, the TEC qualification achievement rate shows 26 per cent. This is because of a database reporting error. OPC's records show that 82 per cent achieved the level 3 certificate, and 80 per cent the level 4 certificate and level 5 diploma. These figures have remained stable over the past three years. OPC is working together with the TEC to ensure that the reporting of national qualification outcomes and the TEC performance data reports are accurate.

OPC has recognised that the participation rates in the level 3 certificate have been steadily decreasing because of funding and the ability of teachers to take time out to attend the current three-month programme. OPC believes that the secondary school teachers and other outdoor educators for whom this programme was originally intended value the programme, and it wants to see how it can better meet the needs of this sector. The organisation aims to better understand the value of the qualification through taking part in the full outdoor education sector qualification review in 2011.

The number of places in the diploma programme each year is eight. This means not all level 4 graduates are able to transition to the level 5 qualification. Graduates are often employed as outdoor guides with just the level 4 certificate, which indicates that employers are taking on guides without the level 5 qualification. The organisation has identified that some withdrawals from courses are the result of trainees enrolling in courses to develop outdoor skills for personal reasons and not to gain a qualification. This has been noticeable in the past, with some students coming to New Zealand to study outdoor instructing to advance their level of skill but not always to provide instruction. OPC has reviewed its selection policy to ensure that it is selecting people to become outdoor instructors, which is the purpose of this programme. This has already led to improved qualification completions in 2011.

OPC also encourages trainee instructors to achieve New Zealand Outdoors Instructor Association (NZOIA) qualifications within their training. However, because OPC does not pay for these qualifications, it does not record their achievement. Doing so would provide information on how well the skills taught within OPC's instructor training programmes align with outdoor instructor industry standards. The upcoming review of qualifications with industry intends to make this alignment more transparent.

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

OPC uses employment outcomes, the number of graduates entering into further study, qualification completion numbers, as well as exit interviews to compare achievement outcomes each year. However, more formal analysis of outcomes between all of its instructors could be conducted to gain further information on how to increase success rates for students overall.

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**.

A large number of graduates are employed in the industry following their training with OPC. The organisation knows this because it employs graduates as instructors and tracks previous domestic and international students through informal feedback systems such as Facebook. Trainees interviewed by the evaluation team said that they choose to study with OPC because many employers recognise the OPC brand for providing practical, hands-on experience in group instruction with clients in the outdoors. The number of graduates who have reported that they have found work in the sector indicates that employers see the training as relevant.

The decreasing number of secondary school outdoor education teachers enrolling in the level 3 certificate indicates that secondary schools do not value the courses as highly as in previous years. OPC has identified this and intends to review how it can provide a course to better meet the needs of secondary school teachers.

Results from OPC's online survey used to gather feedback from clients and secondary school groups shows a high satisfaction with the programme indicating that the courses are highly valued. The evaluation reports are reviewed on a weekly basis to identify any issues and relevant feedback provided to all staff. All results are formally analysed monthly by the management team to identify trends over time.

The organisation has strong relationships with other outdoor education providers and the industry, as well as its ongoing relationships with many tertiary students, which provides the organisation with information on how well its courses are valued. OPC's challenge is to align the qualitative, anecdotal evidence of value with the course outcomes to ensure that its courses are valued by industry and trainees. The new client management system, called M-savvy, is currently being implemented to keep track of stakeholder feedback.

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**.

OPC meets the needs of trainees and employers, with trainees gaining hands-on, practical experience of instructing in the outdoors. The level 4 certificate is a year-long programme containing activities to help trainees learn educational and technical skills. Trainees gain instructing skills through co-facilitating secondary school groups on short courses, such as training on weather patterns and outdoor skills in an outdoor environment in a safe manner. On completion, OPC offers eight places to level 4 graduates in the level 5 courses. The level 5 courses provide further training in outdoor skills and more leadership roles in educating in the outdoors.

OPC has a system for reviewing courses to ensure the content is matching the needs of the industry and trainees. The course coordinators review courses as issues arise using feedback from trainees, staff, and industry. The course coordinators also checks that content covers the unit standard assessment requirements and makes the appropriate changes to the course if required. A recent example of changes made to the content of the level 4 programme was the inclusion of a two-day international standard training course, called Leave no Trace, which will be delivered in conjunction with Leave No Trace New Zealand which has a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Conservation. This course aims to provide staff with up-to-date understanding and knowledge of the latest standard that will replace the current environmental care code and will help OPC instructors teach students or clients in the new standards.

The organisation is focussed on aligning its qualifications to meet newly developed industry standards. OPC is also preparing for the sector-wide qualification review that will take place over 2011-12. The main purpose of this is to align all outdoor education qualifications for the industry.

OPC recognises that the steadily decreasing number of secondary school teachers enrolling in the level 3 certificate suggests that this course is no longer meeting the needs of secondary schools, and has planned a review of the certificate in 2011. Previously, the course was developed for people with a background in teaching to develop their ability to teach outdoor skills and risk management to secondary school students, over a period of 12 weeks.

OPC is meeting the need of secondary schools to develop students' confidence as well as their outdoor and leadership knowledge and skills. OPC does this by contacting the secondary schools prior to courses to find out what they would like their students to gain from participating in a school programme, and tailors the group courses to suit. However, ensuring that all instructors are trained in unit standard assessment practices will enable instructors to better meet the needs of secondary schools that require students to achieve unit standards.

An external review of the secondary school programme recommended that OPC include a more cross-curricular experience for secondary schools students by aligning more closely to

the New Zealand Secondary schools curriculum. In addition, the review recommended that OPC review its trust deed to refer to outdoor education as opposed to pursuits and ensure its training features a learner-centred approach.

Because of the nature of the training programmes, OPC management and staff are highly focussed on safety and conduct regular internal and external safety audits of equipment and practice. A recent industry safety audit report stated that OPC has very high safety systems and practices in place.

Overall, the organisation has prioritised the review of programmes to ensure they meet stakeholders' needs for 2011 as part of its ongoing self-assessment plan.

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**.

OPC reviews all course reports and outcomes half-way through the year and at the end of each year to identify any issues in order to inform individual training needs. More information could be gained from analysing feedback from clients or students to inform OPC's own practices and feedback to individual instructors. Instructors also have an opportunity to review their own performance at weekly staff meetings.

OPC encourages a culture of senior staff supporting new staff to become familiar with their role. This is undertaken by new staff co-instructing on courses with senior staff. Staff spoken to said this taught them useful skills such as how to motivate trainees and provide a safe learning environment. A training pathway is in place for instructors consisting of a range of in-house and external training. Secondary school and tertiary instructors receive in-house training on teaching practices and assessment of unit standards at induction. In 2010, staff attended a Skills Active 4098 training course, which most staff have yet to complete. Senior staff have an opportunity to become registered with the New Zealand Outdoors Registration Board (NZORB) assessors.

OPC has had its assessment activities and guidelines approved by the standard-setting body, Skills Active. It is currently in an ongoing process with Skills Active to ensure the quality of assessment decisions is maintained.

OPC recruits well trained, suitable staff from its own pool of recent graduates and from external applicants who have specialist skills in the outdoors and in instructing. The organisation has a career development pathway available for staff to track their progress. OPC provides four in-house staff training weeks throughout the year to help staff remain current, such as the previously mentioned Leave No Trace programme, as well as assistance to obtain the external NZOIA instructor grades. OPC provides all staff with full funding for compulsory courses, such as first aid training and licences, and subsidises the staff outdoor instructor qualifications according to their instructor level and OPC staff requirements. . .

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**.

OPC is very supportive of trainees and demonstrates this in a number of ways. The organisation uses information from individual needs analysis at enrolment to pick up any learning issues, and provides relevant guidance and support. Trainees' previous qualifications and/or skill competency levels are also recorded at enrolment and a training plan is developed to meet trainees' needs. An example of where the organisation helped a trainee to overcome a learning issue was documented in 2010; as a result of the one-to-one literacy and numeracy activities used by the tutor, the trainee was able to successfully achieve the unit standard outcomes.

The supportive nature of the training is also evident in the ethos of OPC as an outdoor centre whose aim is to build client confidence as well as skills using activities in the outdoors. The organisation purposely limits the number of trainees on each course, which enables a tutor-to-trainee ratio of 1:4 for practical activities. This means trainees are not only gaining more one-to-one support, they are also carrying out activities in a safely monitored environment. All trainees said they were very satisfied with the support from their tutors.

OPC revised its selection policy at the end of 2010, which has led to increased qualification completion rates. It found that a small number of trainees were withdrawing from courses because they only wanted to develop outdoors skills and not use them to become outdoor instructors; therefore, the commitment to complete the qualification was absent. The 2011 level 4 and diploma trainees were aware of this and the majority were keen to complete their qualifications to work as outdoor instructors in the industry and possibly become an OPC outdoor instructor. There were no international students enrolled in 2011, therefore OPC is not able to identify whether completion rates for international students will increase as a result of this selection policy. Previously, OPC has enrolled only low numbers of international students, but their feedback has been very positive about their experience with OPC.

OPC has created an open learning environment, with appropriate resources for learning, such as building a new classroom teaching space, more internet access, and providing equipment for hire until trainees can afford to buy their own.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

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

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

OPC has committed itself to being an open, transparent organisation that encourages self-assessment among its staff. It aims to embed the culture of self-assessment of quality and improvement, similar to the embedded safety culture where everyone takes responsibility.

The OPC board has commissioned a number of external reviews in the past three years alongside its internal review of processes and practices. OPC commissioned an independent report on the Mangatepopo drowning tragedy of which a summary of the findings is available to the public on the website. This is to enable people in the outdoors community and OPC's own staff to learn lessons from the tragedy and enhance their own practices. As a result of the review, staff are encouraged to be open about any concerns, which has led to a more open culture.

The focus on safety is embedded into the culture of the organisation, which was confirmed by a Department of Labour Safety Culture survey. This was also supported by the Outdoors Mark Safety Audit, May 2011, which stated: "OPC Tongariro has excellent safety systems in place, better than any this auditor has audited".

A review of its secondary school programme identified that OPC needs to train and select outdoor instructors with the right balance of educational, interpersonal as well as technical skills in order to be effective in instructing safely and to motivate and inspire people in the outdoors.

OPC continues to experience changes, with the head office relocated to Auckland at the end of 2010. The organisation acknowledges that there is a period of adjustment while staff adapt to the new processes and resulting reporting lines. The organisation has a two-day workshop planned in June 2011 to bring staff and external stakeholders together to provide input on OPC's future educational philosophy and planning for secondary school programmes. The organisation has taken actions to promote its training programmes to local iwi and has yet to see whether this will increase Māori participation in the training and as outdoor instructors.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: International students

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: Certificate in Outdoor Adventure Skills and Leadership (Level 4)

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

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

2.4 Focus area: Certificate of Outdoor Education (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**.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix

Regulatory 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 non-university TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses 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 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).

*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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