



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report



Whenua Iti Trust Incorporated
Outdoor Pursuits Centre

Date of report: 12 September 2023

About Whenua Iti Trust Incorporated Outdoor Pursuits Centre

Whenua Iti Outdoors has been in operation for almost 30 years. The organisation provides a diverse suite of nature-based learning activities and courses to growing numbers of primary and secondary school students from the Nelson, Marlborough and West Coast regions.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	375 Main Road, Lower Moutere, Nelson
Eligible to enrol intl students:	No
Number of students:	<u>2022:</u> Trades Academy, 246 students, 29 EFTS ¹ ; 30 per cent Māori, 3 per cent Pasifika; disabled student numbers were not available. 5886 participants across all outdoor adventure activities in 2022; 28 per cent Māori, 2 per cent Pasifika
Number of staff:	36 full-time equivalents (0.8 FTE or higher); 20 part-time
TEO profile:	Whenua Iti Trust Incorporated Outdoor Pursuits Centre
Last EER outcome:	At the previous EER, conducted on 29 May 2019, NZQA was Highly Confident in Whenua Iti Outdoor's educational performance and Highly Confident in its capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trades Academy courses for secondary school students• Manaaki Tāpoi (Level 2) (non-NZQA approved)• Adventure Tourism Leadership (Level 2) [114703-3]

¹ Equivalent full-time students

MoE number: 9858
NZQA reference: C53093
Dates of blended EER visit: 30 and 31 May 2023

Summary of results

Strong, values-based governance and leadership underpins successful delivery of experiential learning activities. Whenua Iti has meaningful engagement in the region and the outdoor education and activities sector which informs their practice. Students gain NCEA credits and other important outcomes including enhanced personal development and self-awareness, social connection and engagement with the natural world. Whenua Iti Outdoors (WIO) invests in ongoing, effective evaluation and self-assessment to determine the impact and value of activities for individuals and their communities.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Experiential learning activities enable the students to reach their personal and learning goals. Successful completion rates for Trades Academy students are consistently above the national average, with high rates of NCEA credit achievement. Schools, whānau and other stakeholders, including iwi, report on the positive learning environment and the high value of outcomes for learners and their communities.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- WIO is a resilient and innovative organisation with a clear strategy to support its mission ‘to achieve positive change in individuals and communities’. Strong governance and leadership engages effectively with stakeholders to identify and meet needs.
- Programmes, activities, staff and students align closely with WIO values. Whakamana, kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga and whanaungatanga underpin the cultural components embedded within all activities and contribute to strengthening relationships with iwi in the region.
- WIO understands the importance of measuring the impact of delivery on student achievement. However, the organisation is still developing and refining its evaluative processes to effectively demonstrate this evidence. There is an embedded culture of reflection that informs ongoing improvement.

Key evaluation question findings²

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students of all ages participate in courses that engage them with experiential learning in natural outdoor settings. This provides opportunities for exploration, discovery, challenge and connection with nature which leads the students to develop their personal skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Trades Academy courses consider attendance, credit achievement and destinations as success measures. Attendance rates for WIO range from 88 to 92 per cent for 2020-22, with completion rates for the same period ranging from 94 to 97 per cent. Māori students achieve well. NCEA credit pass rates for Māori students who completed their programme in 2022 was 99 per cent.</p> <p>The latest available Top of the South Academy (TOTSTA³) destination data⁴ showed that 46 out of 66 level 2 students and 16 out of 53 level 3 students returned to school. NCEA achievement for TOTSTA students in 2021 was 97 per cent compared with the national average of 73 per cent.</p> <p>WIO commissioned a project⁵ to analyse student achievement in their Trades Academy courses in term 3 of 2022. This study contributed to the development and improvement of an outcomes framework introduced in 2016 to provide evidence of the impact and value of WIO courses for students. Students</p>

² The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

³ Top of the South Trades Academy provides funding for secondary school students to achieve NCEA credits at school while gaining trades skills through courses with Te Pūkenga – Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology and Whenua Iti Outdoors. WIO contributes 40 per cent of TOTSTA [Trades Academy](#) enrolments, and NMIT, 60 per cent.

⁴ Table 1, 2021 TOTSTA WIO student destination data

⁵ Wylie, S. (Dec 2022). Outcomes report for trades academy programmes delivered by Whenua Iti Outdoors, Term 3, 2022. Social Research and Evaluation. Supported by funding from Sport New Zealand.

	self-rated outcomes for all at 80 per cent or higher, except for understanding of tikanga and te ao Māori (57 per cent). Students also rated their improvement in employability skills at 90 per cent or above, with teamwork the lowest at 87 per cent.
Conclusion:	WIO understands student achievement through a range of mechanisms, including an outcomes framework that continues to be developed and improved. Students in Trades Academy courses stay engaged in school. They also gain credits towards NCEA while learning valuable social skills and knowledge related to kaitiakitanga in their local natural environment.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The high value and impact of WIO courses to individuals and communities in the region is recognised by students, schools, whānau and iwi. Students and stakeholders spoke of enhanced wellbeing and social engagement following participation in the courses. Demand for WIO courses is growing, and the organisation has grown to meet this demand. Trades Academy courses have more students enrolled than the PTE is funded for, and there are always waiting lists for places.</p> <p>Some students attributed their success at school to participation in WIO courses. Some graduates have gone on to further study in outdoor education at Te Pūkenga after finishing school. Other school students are intending to follow outdoor recreation as a career path. Two recent graduates are working as trainee instructors at WIO.</p> <p>WIO has a strong focus on equity, inclusion and te Tiriti o Waitangi. This kaupapa supports growth and understanding of tikanga for all students and staff and links to kaitiakitanga within all programme design. This was evident across the organisation. The embedding of te ao Māori in all aspects of Manaaki Tāpoi was evident in conversations between the evaluators and students and staff.</p> <p>WIO collaborates with the Department of Conservation, Enviroschools and local iwi on programmes like Kaimahi for</p>

	<p>Nature Connection and Ngāti Koata Wānanga Rangatahi. This demonstrates valued relationships leading to important outcomes for iwi and the community within the region.</p> <p>WIO is working to improve reporting to gather more robust and consistent evidence from a range of sources, including tutors and the community, to understand the value of the programmes for students and more broadly for the sector.</p>
Conclusion:	The programmes enable students to engage with nature and develop confidence and social connection in a safe and supported learning context. Further development of tools and systems to enhance impact reporting will provide opportunities to consolidate understanding of achievement and valued outcomes for students and their communities.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The courses intentionally create learning opportunities that develop students' personal growth and connection to nature, tikanga and te ao Māori. Collaborative design is evident in tailored programmes for specific groups including iwi.</p> <p>Students undertake outdoor activities in the outstanding natural environment using top-quality equipment including mountain bikes, rock climbing gear and kayaks.</p> <p>Courses are well designed, with clear aims and objectives. These include personal and social development objectives that are assessed in an integrated way alongside practical and technical outdoor skills. Assessments are aligned to unit standards. Tutors observe and provide feedback to individuals on the achievement of these skills during and at the end of the courses.</p> <p>Clear processes for internal pre- and post-assessment moderation provide confidence in the quality of assessment practice, and this is validated by external moderation.</p> <p>Programme review meetings discuss on-course and post-course feedback from staff, students and stakeholders to inform</p>

	<p>understanding and improvements. Reporting to schools and funders provides stakeholders with evidence of achievement and is used in programme review and improvement. Changes are communicated to stakeholders when they are implemented.</p> <p>Self-assessment and reflective practice is embedded into course delivery. Processes are in place to ensure unit standards are current. However, WIO needs to ensure that changes to programmes are consistently tracked and monitored against NZQA approvals.</p>
Conclusion:	Courses are designed and delivered with the needs of students and stakeholders in mind. The learning environment and outdoor resources are well utilised to maximise learning opportunities for diverse student groups. WIO courses fill a key niche, complementing other education offered in the region.

1.4 How effectively are students supported in their learning?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Staff are well qualified and experienced in relevant outdoor activities and demonstrate the capability to work with diverse groups of students from a range of backgrounds and contexts. External review⁶ endorses the positive youth-focused approach and suitability of staff to work with young people.</p> <p>Intentional selection of students based on information provided pre-course sets up for the establishment of groups, matching students with staff members to enable good group dynamics that provide a safe social environment. Students develop and maintain valued relationships with others in their cohort.</p> <p>Students are well supported in an inclusive environment that considers and meets individual needs. There is a strong sense of respect and care that students value. This kaupapa is well expressed and supports an atmosphere and context where both disengaged and high-achieving students can achieve at their own pace, with support if needed.</p>

⁶ Scope Aotearoa Charitable Trust (Sept 2022) Scope review report: Whenua Iti Outdoors.

	<p>Courses are well resourced, with travel and suitable equipment provided to ensure equity of participation. WIO also provides scholarships where students need financial help.</p> <p>Safety is a key aspect of the student experience and is well managed, including incident review and rapid resolution of issues. This is endorsed by data that 95 per cent of Trades Academy students in term 3, 2022 felt safe throughout the programme.⁷</p> <p>WIO has a comprehensive framework to gather feedback on the student experience during and after delivery to inform improvement. Some tutor and stakeholder feedback has not been collected in the past few years. Reinstatement of these feedback channels will provide better understanding of how well students are supported and will inform improvements.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Students are well supported in a safe and inclusive environment. Safety is a key aspect of the student experience, and this is well managed. Social connection and personal development are key outcomes of the training. Tutors have a positive, youth-focused approach that supports students to meet challenges and succeed. Systematic collection and analysis of tutor feedback will provide a more complete understanding of the effectiveness of student support.</p>

⁷ Wylie, S. (Dec 2022). Outcomes report for trades academy programmes delivered by Whenua Iti Outdoors, Term 3, 2022. Social Research and Evaluation

1.5 How effective are governance and management at supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The board and management team have a clear vision that is shared throughout WIO and aligned with a set of strategic goals. WIO is a complex business operation with multiple funding streams and reporting requirements. The recent establishment of a foundation to enhance fundraising opportunities and manage profit from WIO's international activities demonstrates innovative practice aligned with a social enterprise philosophy. The general manager engages with regional and national governance and leadership within the outdoors and education sectors.</p> <p>Board members have a mix of experience and knowledge in the sector and region. WIO values underpin all activities. Relationships with nature, te ao Māori and Māoritanga are embedded in daily operations and contribute to the growth of relationships with iwi and other regional groups.</p> <p>There is clear and effective communication between board, management and staff, with formal reporting and face-to-face meetings to keep staff up to date with organisational direction and changes. Effective communication and ongoing reflection support organisational self-assessment and ongoing evaluation of performance to ensure continuous improvement and innovation.</p> <p>Covid-19 and severe weather events have provided significant and ongoing challenges. WIO responded with agility and innovation to ensure the organisation continued to operate. While students were unable to attend courses, tutors created online learning opportunities to keep the students connected to the natural world in their own environments.</p> <p>Tutors are well supported with professional development and opportunities to gain and maintain required certification. Cadetships and trainee tutor apprenticeships are effective in recruiting and retaining young staff into the Whenua Iti whānau. Whānau groups and mentoring processes support staff to learn and develop and ensure effective communication across and within teams.</p>
Conclusion:	WIO is effectively navigating a period of significant growth and using innovative ways to maintain the culture and values of the

	organisation. Monitoring and evaluation of performance against targets continues to inform the organisational direction and drive improvement.
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1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>WIO generally manages its compliance responsibilities well using effective internal systems and processes. The internal quality management system is regularly and systematically reviewed. WIO thoroughly understands and implements standard operating procedures to ensure safe delivery of the training.</p> <p>Management of health and safety is a key focus, and processes are in place to check equipment after each course and to review and respond to incidents immediately. A safety committee meets regularly and reports to the safety and operations subcommittee of the governance board. Safe practices are underpinned by careful planning, risk management, equipment maintenance and regular safety reviews.</p> <p>There are minor gaps in the monitoring of programme changes. WIO could address this by monitoring and tracking programme changes against the approval documentation.</p> <p>External quality assurance undertaken regularly by Te Kāhui Kāhu and Qualmarx provides validation of practice and insights that lead to improvement.</p> <p>Pre-assessment and post-assessment moderation processes provide assurance that assessments are appropriate and that assessor judgements are valid.</p>
Conclusion:	Management of compliance is effective in most important areas. Safety is a key focus and is managed well. Assessment and moderation processes are robust. A simple system to regularly monitor course changes would enhance compliance.

Focus areas

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

2.1 Adventure Tourism Leadership (Training Scheme) (Level 2) – Trades Academy

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students have opportunities to connect with nature and gain outdoors skills and technical knowledge while developing personally and socially in four, four-day residential courses. Students come from a range of school settings from the Nelson, Tasman, Marlborough, and West Coast regions, while remaining enrolled at school. Students gain credits towards NCEA.</p> <p>Experienced tutors guide students through activities including mountain biking, kayaking, caving and rock climbing. The course contributes to valued outcomes for students, schools and whānau in the region.</p> <p>Feedback contributes to reporting on achievement to students, schools and whānau. Processes are in place to review and make changes to courses including ensuring current unit standard versions are used. These processes could be enhanced to monitor and track these changes against the documented approval.</p>
Conclusion:	Students achieve credits towards NCEA through a learning experience focused on outdoor experiences. Students are challenged through outdoor activities while developing confidence, social connection and technical skills.

2.2 Manaaki Tāpoi (Level 2) (non-NZQA Approved) – Trades Academy

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	Groups of students from different schools in the region develop close relationships with each other and with their tutors during four, four-day residential courses that celebrate cultural (indigenous) tourism. Personal and social development in a te

	<p>ao Māori context is assessed using unit standards that contribute to NCEA achievement.</p> <p>Students described increased understanding of tikanga and te taiao, kaitiakitanga, and a very strong social connection within the student cohort.</p> <p>This course is an excellent example of effective collaboration with iwi in the programme design and delivery on marae throughout the region.</p>
Conclusion:	Students gain confidence and connection with te ao Māori and gain credits towards NCEA in a supportive environment. This challenges students to set and achieve stretch goals.

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that Whenua Iti Trust Incorporated Outdoor Pursuits Centre:

- implement a process to monitor and track course changes against documented approval, and report changes to NZQA where required.
- continue to develop suitable tools and reporting processes to demonstrate the value and impact of activities and courses.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

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

Appendix 1

Table 1

2021 TOTSTA WIO Student Destination Data

Programme	Apprenticeship	Employment excluding Apprenticeships	Left New Zealand	Other	Other Tertiary Study	Returned to School	Total
ATL L2	1	3			1	8	13
ATL L3		4		1	5	2	12
ENV L3	1				2	1	4
PCC L3	1	4			4	5	14
MT L2		5		3		16	24
MT L3		2		2	3	4	11
MT L3 Ext		1			2	3	6
US L2		3	1	3		22	29
CDER L3		2			3	1	6
Total	3	24	1	9	20	62	119

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud⁸*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

⁸ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs excluding universities, and*
- maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, micro-credentials and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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