

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

## Seabrook McKenzie Centre for Specific Learning Disabilities

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 16 January 2013

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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:	Seabrook McKenzie Centre for Specific Learning Disabilities (Seabrook)
Type:	Private training establishment
Location:	68 London St, Christchurch
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	1 March 1995
Courses currently delivered	Diploma in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5)
Code of Practice signatory?	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 20 students in 2012
Number of staff:	Seven part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	Diploma in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5)
Distinctive characteristics:	Entry to the diploma is open to trainees with qualifications in teaching, speech language therapy, occupational therapy, or allied health professions. The training comprises five modules, delivered through a mix of block courses, supervised practice, and self-directed learning. The first module is a stand-alone programme useful for practising teachers in mainstream schools. The second module is the minimum requirement for teachers wishing to work at Seabrook. Modules three to five, which complete the diploma, are in-service training for experienced

	specific learning disabilities (SLD) teachers.
Recent significant changes:	Seabrook reports that its service provision (including teacher training) was significantly affected by the Christchurch earthquakes.
Previous quality assurance history:	The NZQA quality assurance audit in 2007 found that Seabrook met all but two requirements relating to governance and management, specifically not supplying the required financial reports to NZQA within three months of the organisation's financial year-end.
Other:	Seabrook is a charitable trust, providing a range of professional services for children with SLD, including individual training programmes, community education, teacher training parent support, as well as full-time schooling for children with severe SLD.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review included:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Diploma in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5)

The first focus area is mandatory and the diploma is the only programme offered.

## 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 Seabrook for one day. Interviews were held with the clinical director, the chairperson of the teacher training team, three tutors, and the principal of the Jean Seabrook Memorial School. Telephone interviews were conducted with two current trainees, a member of the trust board, a resource teacher (learning and behaviour), and a parent of a child with specific learning disabilities. Documents and other resources were sighted and reviewed.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Seabrook McKenzie Centre for Specific Learning Disabilities**.

As a provider of professional services related to SLD, Seabrook has a very good understanding of the knowledge, skills, and attributes of effective teachers for children with SLD. The teacher training activities are closely integrated with the centre's overall purpose and vision, and the quality of the training of the teachers is crucial for Seabrook's ability to continue to meet the needs of its (approximately) 400 clients (children and their families) each year.

Evidence was available from interviews and Seabrook feedback that the training is effective in ensuring that Seabrook's network of registered teachers (contracted after completing modules one and two of the diploma) have the appropriate knowledge and practical skills to identify children's learning needs and to develop individualised programmes to address them. In addition, as the needs of children with SLD have been more widely recognised over recent years by mainstream education providers, Seabrook has developed module one as a stand-alone professional development course for teachers seeking to better accommodate such children in their classrooms. The steady demand for this course, the willingness of schools to support staff to attend, and the subsequent increases in referrals of children from those schools attest to the value of the training for augmenting classroom teaching skills.

The approach taken to training is effective in ensuring good levels of trainee success for modules one and two; in 2012, 11 out of 13 trainees (85 per cent) successfully completed module one, and five out of seven trainees (71 per cent) successfully completed module two. The training includes matching of delivery methods with desired learning outcomes (theoretical knowledge or practical skills), individual mentoring for supervised practice, and a high level of individual attention and feedback. The opportunity to learn from practising SLD teachers with significant experience is highly valued by the trainees. Modules three to five (which would lead to the completion of the diploma) are available only to teachers with significant practical experience in the field. To date, only a small number of teachers have completed module three (four out of 12 who started). Seabrook has not been able to offer module four (requiring a minimum of four participants) but plans to do so in 2013, and therefore no students have completed the diploma as yet. Evidence was available of analysis of achievement data since 2006, as well as the development of strategies to address variations in retention and completion rates over the period to 2012.

The evaluation team is confident in Seabrook's current and future educational performance based on evidence of the formal outcomes of the programme,

together with stakeholder satisfaction and the highly specialised skills and experience of the staff delivering the training.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Seabrook McKenzie Centre for Specific Learning Disabilities**.

Seabrook has valid and reliable data on learner achievement which is underpinned by evidence of effective teaching (including a range of strategies and activities to meet learner needs and maintain an effective learning environment), and robust assessment and moderation practices. Individual progress is closely monitored by tutors and discussed regularly at meetings. The performance of each intake is reviewed by the clinical director and reported to the board. Examples of initiatives to improve outcomes include a greater focus on identifying teaching ability before admission to module two.

Seabrook is a well-organised and responsive training provider with a strong commitment to learner support, and has processes in place to monitor trainee participation and provide ongoing individual guidance. Trainees are given regular opportunities to provide written feedback, which is reviewed by the clinical director and discussed among the tutors. Evidence was available of changes made in response to feedback, such as the inclusion of workshop activities in block courses for module one to enhance learner engagement, and the introduction of monthly tutorials to increase the support available for module two trainees. The planned development of a new minutes format for recording teacher training team meetings will enhance the ability to track changes and evaluate their impact.

Seabrook accesses useful information on learner outcomes from a variety of sources, which it uses to identify strengths and weaknesses and to develop improvements. Examples includes closer tracking of the time taken to complete module two, and the provision of additional support to trainees. Seabrook largely relies on sources such as periodic psychologist reports assessing children's learning progress, or informal conversations (with schools and other professionals), or anecdotes. A more systematic and proactive approach to finding out and understanding how well the training meets learner needs and prepares them to work with children with SLD would strengthen the validity of Seabrook's self-assessment practices and contribute to further improved outcomes for SLD learners and their families.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 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**.

Trainees at Seabrook are having a positive learning experience and are achieving well overall, particularly in modules one and two. They are acquiring theoretical knowledge and useful practical skills which are directly related to their employment as teachers (either within mainstream schools or at Seabrook). Stakeholder feedback to the evaluation team confirmed that classroom teachers who complete module one have a good understanding of the underpinning theory and research about SLD and can implement strategies for supporting children with SLD in the school environment.

In 2012, 11 out of 13 trainees (85 per cent) successfully completed module one, eight of whom have progressed to module two. Trainees who successfully complete module two qualify for employment with Seabrook; seven out of nine trainees from the 2010 intake successfully completed module two (78 per cent), and six were employed by Seabrook. Interviews and feedback confirmed that Seabrook's network of registered teachers have the appropriate knowledge and practical skills to identify children's learning needs and to develop individualised programmes to address them. To date, only four teachers have completed module three and there are no module four or diploma completions as yet. Seabrook suggests that this reflects the challenging in-service and self-directed nature of the modules, and the requirement for significant practical experience in the field. Seabrook has sought to provide more opportunities for tutorial support within module three, to maintain student engagement with the diploma programme while the students acquire practical experience, and plans to offer module four in 2013.

Seabrook has valid and reliable data on learner achievement which is underpinned by robust assessment and moderation practices. There is no formal benchmarking with the other main provider of training for teaching children with SLD. However, Seabrook reports that occasional exchanges of staff and students between the two organisations provide some assurance of the quality of the Seabrook programme. Individual learner progress is closely monitored, and cohort data (from 2006 onwards) has been analysed to achieve a greater understanding of learner outcomes (including retention rates and successful completion of modules, progression between modules, and employment outcomes). Several strategies have been implemented to address variations in educational performance. These include a greater focus on identifying teaching ability before admitting trainees to

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

module two, as well as closer tracking of the time taken to complete module two and the provision of additional support. Seabrook provided data for 2010 which indicated that these strategies were effective, although the organisation noted that the Christchurch earthquakes affected both retention and completion during 2011.

## 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**.

At Seabrook there is a direct connection between the teacher training programme and employment for learners. Module one is valued by mainstream teachers seeking to augment their teaching skills to better support children with SLD in their classrooms. This is evidenced by the steady demand for this course and the willingness of schools to support staff to attend. Trainees who have successfully completed module two gain access to employment with Seabrook. The quality of the training of their teachers is crucial to Seabrook's ability to meet the needs of children with SLD (and their families) and to respond to the growing recognition of SLD within the education sector. Interviews with educators and parents confirmed the high value placed on the training and the importance of having skilled teachers to work with children with SLD, their families, and schools.

The teacher training programme is essential to sustaining the service provision of Seabrook, which has demanding requirements in terms of theoretical expertise and applied skills. While there is no obligation on teachers to complete the diploma, modules three to five provide opportunities for staff seeking to deepen their knowledge and to extend their ability to support the most challenging clients. To date, only four teachers have completed module three. Seabrook has identified that the pool of diploma-qualified SLD teachers is small and that this is a succession planning issue for the organisation, and it is currently considering how to encourage trainees through the educational pathway.

Seabrook staff are actively engaged with the wider professional community working in the field of SLD, and are contributing to the provision of support beyond Canterbury, through relationships with other providers and education agencies. These relationships, together with access to local and international research, enhance Seabrook's capacity to respond to changes in societal attitudes and recognition of the value of SLD education. Seabrook has a good understanding, achieved through routine activities and informal dialogue, of the usefulness of the training for its trainees. However, a more proactive approach to collecting stakeholder feedback from the workplace (from both mainstream schools and within Seabrook) could provide more comprehensive and useful information for identifying improvements.

### 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 **Good**.

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

The teacher training programme has been developed to ensure that Seabrook can deliver services to meet the needs of children with SLD, their families, and the wider community. Modules one and two are effective in ensuring that trainees develop the specialised skills and knowledge necessary for the intended scope of application (either within mainstream classrooms or as specialist tutors working with individual children).

Over the last five years, the programme has been refocused to reflect international research on SLD teaching methods, which has led to a greater emphasis on the practical aspect of applying knowledge and developing individualised programmes. Therefore, while module one is primarily lecture-based, which enables a large amount of theory to be covered in a compressed time, a small applied component has recently been incorporated. Module two provides for a very high level of individual attention and feedback for trainees as they build their practical skills through lectures, individual mentoring for supervised practice (working with two clients), and tutorials. There is limited evidence at this stage as to the effectiveness of these changes. Monthly lectures and more tutorial support will be incorporated into module three (in 2013) to foster student engagement with the programme, and to support the students' transition from stage one of the diploma (modules one and two), to stage two (modules three to five), which is largely self-directed. Trainees and stakeholders have responded positively to the greater emphasis on practical skills, which enhances learning and fosters confidence.

Seabrook is also responsive to feedback from testers (psychologists who assess children's learning progress), which recently identified an imbalance between underlying skills (such as memory) and reading and writing. Changes made include a greater emphasis on the literacy component of the programme, and this has also informed the professional development programme for all of Seabrook's tutors.

Trainees are given regular opportunities to provide written feedback on their learning experience and overall satisfaction, which is reviewed by the clinical director and discussed among the tutors. The evaluators noted the detailed feedback provided by trainees and the evidence of changes made by Seabrook, such as increasing the amount of interaction during lectures. Interviews with current trainees confirmed that they felt well supported and that Seabrook had been effective in responding to their learning needs. There is an opportunity for Seabrook to be more systematic in bringing together useful information from a variety of sources periodically to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and to develop improvements.

#### 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**.

Seabrook trainees are motivated learners who rate their tutors highly and are achieving well overall, particularly in modules one and two. Tutors are all qualified and experienced and hold a number of roles within Seabrook, including teaching individual clients or teaching in the Jean Seabrook Memorial School for children with severe SLD. Trainee feedback sighted by the evaluators commented positively on the tutors' knowledge and expertise and how they enhanced the learning experience. Moderation practices have been established to ensure that assessment is consistent and fair. Trainees receive comprehensive feedback on their progress, in particular during module two.

Tutors provided examples of their individual approaches to reflective practice and reported that they worked closely together in regular team meetings to identify improvements. Professional development opportunities are made available in regular pod meetings (of all practising teachers) which ensure their professional currency and extend their skills. There is no formal appraisal system for tutors, and although several peer observations have recently taken place, which tutors report were useful, there is no requirement to participate. Seabrook largely relies on trainee feedback (which is collated and shared with each tutor by management) to assess the effectiveness of teaching. A more comprehensive process for reviewing tutorial performance (including individual teacher reflections) would be useful in evaluating and improving teaching effectiveness.

#### 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**.

Seabrook provides a high level of guidance and support for its trainees. A comprehensive information pack (which is reviewed annually) is provided which contains useful information on academic and administrative requirements of the programme, and clearly indicates the likely time commitment and workload for each module. Classes are small (no more than 12 in module one), which fosters a high level of interaction and open communication. Tutors accommodate the personal circumstances of the trainees in relation to assignment deadlines and the timetabling of supervised practice. Tutors identify strategies to help struggling trainees to succeed and are available for additional support if required.

Written and verbal feedback from trainees confirmed that they feel well supported by Seabrook staff, who are available and responsive. Their professional guidance and encouragement is particularly important as trainees acquire practical skills and gain confidence in working with children with a variety of learning needs. In recent

years, Seabrook has also sought to ensure, as far as possible, that trainees have the required attributes and abilities to succeed as SLD teachers. This has resulted in some trainees not being admitted to module two or being counselled out of the course. Occasionally, trainees will only receive registration for a limited scope of work at Seabrook.

## 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**.

The board, management, and staff at Seabrook share a commitment to developing high quality teachers of children with SLD, and to supporting the wider community in better meeting these children's needs. The training programme supplies teachers with specialist skills to the organisation, and the close integration of training and service provision ensures training activities are informed by new research and approaches to teaching. This is enhanced by the fact that tutors are also practising SLD teachers within Seabrook.

The organisation has sound processes for programme development, delivery, and assessment and an effective approach to supporting learner achievement. Leadership and communication practices are open and inclusive, and the evaluation team noted a collegial approach to planning and improvement activities. Notwithstanding significant financial constraints and the impact of the Christchurch earthquakes, the organisation is resilient and is responding to change.

Seabrook has some useful data available on learner outcomes from a range of sources, which it uses to identify improvements. Much of this is anecdotal and informal, although written trainee evaluations are collated and analysed. The effectiveness of Seabrook's self-assessment could be strengthened through a more systematic and proactive approach to collecting and using information on learner outcomes and on how well stakeholder needs have been met.

## 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: Diploma in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5)

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

In addition to those recommendations already expressed or implied within the report, NZQA recommends that Seabrook:

- Develop a more systematic approach to collecting and analysing information on learner outcomes and how well stakeholder needs are being met, in order to develop a broader understanding of the factors contributing to educational performance, and to use what is learned to identify changes and improvements that could be made.
- Consider implementing a more comprehensive and formal approach to assessing tutorial performance, to increase the organisation's ability to evaluate and enhance teaching effectiveness.

# 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](http://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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