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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 November 2016

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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

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|--------------------------------|--|
| Name of TEO: | Seabrook McKenzie Centre for Specific Learning Disabilities (Seabrook) |
| Type: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| First registered: | 1995 |
| Location: | 68 London Street, Christchurch |
| Delivery sites: | As above |
| Courses currently delivered: | Diploma in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5) |
| Code of Practice signatory: | No |
| Number of students: | Domestic: 19 students in 2016 (approximately six equivalent full-time students); most students are women between 30 and 60 years of age; in 2016 one student is Māori. |
| Number of staff: | Eight part-time staff |
| Scope of active accreditation: | Diploma in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5) |
| Distinctive characteristics: | The diploma comprises five modules which are offered on a part-time basis. Module one is open to teachers and professionals working in related fields of health and education and aims to provide them with a framework to identify specific learning disabilities (SLD), recognise their effect on the behaviour and learning of students, and understand assessment and intervention |

principles. The course is taught over one term.

Modules two to five are open to qualified teachers who have successfully completed module one and are actively engaged in teaching students with SLD on a one-to-one basis. The modules equip teachers with relevant skills in programme development and planning, teaching methodology and evaluation. The second module is the minimum requirement for teachers wishing to work at Seabrook. On completion, teachers are awarded a Seabrook practising certificate. Modules three to five, which complete the diploma, are undertaken as in-service training for experienced SLD teachers.

Modules one to four are delivered via a mix of lectures and tutorials, workshops, supervised practice and mentoring. As most trainees are in employment, courses are delivered in weekends and school holidays. Module five comprises self-directed learning and research-based assignments.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Recent significant changes: | Seabrook relocated for six months (November 2015 to February 2016) while its earthquake-damaged building was repaired. |
| Previous quality assurance history: | At the previous external evaluation and review (EER), NZQA was Confident in Seabrook's educational performance and capability in self-assessment. |
| Other: | <p>Seabrook is a charitable trust, providing a range of professional services for children with SLD, including individual teaching programmes, community education, teacher training and parent support, as well as full-time schooling for children with severe SLD.</p> <p>Seabrook is currently considering its options with regard to the outcomes of the targeted review of qualifications (TRoQ) process (New Zealand Certificate in Teaching Individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5) 60 credits).</p> |

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER included:

- Governance, management and strategy, which is a mandatory focus area
- Diploma in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5), which is the only programme offered by Seabrook.

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 over two days. Interviews were held with the chairperson of the trust board, the clinical director, the chairperson of the teacher training team, and two current trainees. Telephone interviews were also conducted with two lecturers, two further current trainees, four ex-trainees/graduates and two representatives of schools that access the services of Seabrook-trained teachers.

Documents sighted included teaching and learning records (both paper and online), achievement data, programme documentation and trainee course information, annual reports and meeting minutes, feedback forms and lecturing staff observation records.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

- Seabrook trainees gain theoretical knowledge and practical teaching skills which enable them to work effectively with children with SLD in a classroom setting and/or on a one-to-one basis. The relevance and usefulness of this training for helping children with SLD to access learning was confirmed by a range of stakeholders, including classroom and specialist teachers and school leaders.
- An important outcome of the teacher training for Seabrook, and the wider educational community, is ongoing access to a pool of certified SLD teachers. This enables Seabrook to continue to offer their educational services, which include individual teaching programmes, full-time schooling for children with SLD, and support for parents. The minimum requirement to gain the Seabrook practising certificate is completion of modules one and two.
- Since the previous EER, Seabrook has also focused on succession planning for its teacher training programme by delivering modules three to five to enable trainees to complete the diploma who are then eligible to join the lecturing team. Three have completed and a further four trainees are expected to do so by the end of the year. These are the first graduates from this diploma which is a significant positive outcome for the PTE.
- Learners are achieving very well, with most trainees achieving their study goals. Achievement rates show an improving trend, including 100 per cent completion rates for module one in 2015 (compared with 85 per cent in 2012) and module three in 2014 (not delivered in 2012). The implementation of a number of changes to programme design and delivery (such as changes to timetables and assessment format) have clearly contributed to these improvements.
- Stakeholders confirmed that the approach to training is highly effective, including individual attention and feedback, as well as opportunities to learn from, and observe, experienced SLD teachers. Trainees gain access to an active community of practice, current research and resources and ongoing support from lecturers after the completion of their training, which they highly value.
- Seabrook has established some sound processes for programme development, delivery and assessment and supporting learner achievement, although these processes are largely undocumented. Recently, the effectiveness of some of these processes has been limited by resource constraints and disruption arising from remediation to earthquake-damaged buildings.

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 some useful review and improvement practices which are contributing to strong educational performance. On a reasonably regular basis, aspects of the teacher training programme and activities are reviewed and worthwhile changes are implemented. These processes are largely informal and there is limited evidence of the quality and validity of the information being used for self-assessment. For example, Seabrook has not formally gathered trainee feedback during 2015 and 2016 (previously this was done annually), although lecturers described how informal feedback has been shared and used.
- Learner achievement is closely monitored at an individual and cohort level, and overall achievement is tabulated (records are available from 2007 onwards). Seabrook has identified priorities for improving achievement and these have been effective. For example, the high component of independent learning in module three was identified as a barrier to completion of the module (and consequently the remainder of the diploma). In 2014 Seabrook revised and relaunched the module, including more face-to-face teaching and providing for oral presentations as well as written assignments. All trainees successfully completed the module.
- Seabrook reports that employment outcomes are a secondary benefit for most trainees, who prioritise the acquisition of teaching skills and relevant knowledge. Seabrook largely relies on informal conversations (with schools, parents and other professionals) to understand how well the training prepares teachers to work with children with SLD.
- Seabrook has a small team of lecturers who have specialist knowledge and qualifications and are experienced practitioners in SLD assessment and/or teaching. They participate in, and contribute to, ongoing professional development activities. Co-teaching and occasional peer observations provide opportunities for feedback on their teaching effectiveness. Seabrook undertakes some internal moderation of assessment, although records of these activities are limited. While all interviewees were extremely positive about their learning experience and the expertise of the lecturers, Seabrook has limited evidence of ongoing monitoring of their teaching effectiveness.
- Seabrook generally relies on informal processes for gathering information and feedback and identifying improvements, which reflects the nature and size of the PTE. Improved record-keeping would strengthen the evidence in relation to several important areas (including trainee feedback and internal moderation). However, NZQA found adequate evidence of review and improvement activities and their effectiveness to be confident in Seabrook's capability in self-assessment.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Learner achievement at Seabrook has improved since the previous EER. This improvement is evidenced by higher pass rates in module one, the successful relaunch of module three, and the progress made in offering the whole programme leading to qualification completion. These improvements reflect Seabrook's priorities and practical strategies for better meeting trainee needs and facilitating the pathway to diploma completion within the limited resources available. Table 1 shows module completion data (2012-2015). Trainees are acquiring useful theoretical knowledge and practical skills and strategies for working with children with SLD and their families. Interviewees attested to their increased confidence in the effectiveness of their teaching practice.

Table 1. Seabrook Diploma in Specific Learning Disabilities completion rates (%) by module (2012-2015) (n=number who started the course in the given year)

| Module | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| One | 85% (n=13) | 82% (n=11) | 63% (n=8) | 100% (n=15) | 50% (n=6)* |
| Two | 63% (n=8)* | 57% (n=7)* | 33% (n=3) | N/A* (n=12) | Not offered |
| Three | Not offered | Not offered | 100% (n=8) | Not offered | Not offered |
| Four | Not offered | Not offered | Not offered | 60% (n=10)* | Not offered |
| Five | Not offered | Not offered | Not offered | 100% (n=1) | 60% (n=5)* |

*One or more trainees still in progress.

The achievement data reflects the extended periods taken by some trainees to complete their study, depending on their work commitments and personal circumstances. Relatively lower achievement rates in module two (which is spread over two years) reflect the nature of the programme, which incorporates supervised practice with individual children, and the preference of some trainees to learn the theory only, rather than complete the practical component. Practical challenges may also arise in identifying and completing suitable placements, which has an impact on completion rates and timeframes. Pass rates for modules one and two in 2014 are low compared with other years. Seabrook reports that this reflects the impact of changed personal circumstances for several trainees – which had a disproportionate impact – as a result of the very small number of enrolments that year. While Seabrook is generally flexible and supportive in accommodating

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

trainees' circumstances, several initiatives have been successful in fostering completion, including tighter timeframes for assignment submission in module one and a more structured approach to module three delivery.

Seabrook monitors trainee progress closely, through all programme components. A mix of paper and online records enables the director to track individual and cohort completions, and to provide additional oversight and support as required. Very occasionally, trainees will be given the opportunity to resubmit an assignment. The director reports that most withdrawals arise as a result of personal and family circumstances. There was no evidence of analysis of achievement rates by ethnicity. Achievement data is underpinned by valid assessment. This judgement is based on some internal moderation activities. Examples include pre- and post-assessment of new course materials and assessment for the first two years, co-marking of oral presentations, and independent reviews of marking of assessment for marginal passes. Improved record-keeping is required to provide evidence of these important activities.

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 **Good**.

The teacher training programme is an integral part of Seabrook's overall service provision. As such, the programme is informed by ongoing routine engagement with the wider education community and the organisation's work with children with SLD and their families. Anecdotal evidence is available through this network of the usefulness and relevance of the teacher training. School leaders interviewed during the evaluation confirmed the very positive impact of trained specialist teachers on the learning and wellbeing of children with SLD, noting that the particular nature of the teaching support depends on the needs of the individual concerned. They also noted that classroom teachers are also benefiting from access to the Seabrook-trained teachers' specialist knowledge and expertise.

Approximately half of those who enrol for module one do so seeking to augment their teaching skills to better support children with SLD in their classroom. The steady demand from mainstream teachers reflects the growing recognition of SLD within New Zealand schools and the value of Seabrook's training.

Trainees who successfully complete module two and are registered teachers normally achieve a Seabrook practising certificate. Seabrook exercises good controls over this certification process to maintain the high quality of specialist teachers. This qualification is a minimum requirement for employment with Seabrook which requires a strong grounding in relevant theory and evidence of applied teaching skills. Since 2012, 11 graduates have begun working for Seabrook.

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Modules three to five provide opportunities for experienced specialist teachers to deepen their knowledge, particularly with reference to current research, and to enable them to support children with more serious SLD. Since the previous EER, Seabrook has implemented strategies to encourage trainees through the educational pathway, and has begun to build a pool of diploma-qualified teachers. These are significant outcomes for Seabrook for sustaining their service provision.

Ex-trainees not only attested to the lasting and significant value of the skills and knowledge they have gained, but also report the benefits of ongoing engagement with Seabrook staff, resources and the wider community of practice. This was recently enhanced through the establishment of an online group for sharing ideas. Extremely positive feedback from all stakeholders interviewed confirmed the high value of Seabrook's educational provision. However, there is no evidence of Seabrook gathering feedback to confirm the ongoing relevance and utility of their training or the value for learners.

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 **Good**

Seabrook delivers a targeted programme which is successfully meeting the needs of two main groups of trainees. The programme design is effective in matching content and delivery methods with the learning objectives within each module and providing flexibility for trainees to exit at the point where their study goals have been met.

Module one comprises lectures delivered over one term, and enables education and health professionals to build their knowledge and understanding of the identification of SLD and interventions for children with SLD, to strengthen their classroom teaching or professional practice. Subsequent modules comprise a combination of lectures, tutorials, workshops and practical exercises, delivered at weekends and during school holidays, and supervised practical placements. These modules provide teachers with specialist skills in programme development and planning, teaching methodology and evaluation which equips them to work one-to-one with children with SLD. Modules three to five also incorporate independent learning and an element of personal research which enables experienced teachers to deepen their knowledge and expertise, to prepare them to work with more challenging clients. Current and ex-trainees, and other stakeholders, reported high rates of satisfaction with the programme's focus on understanding neurological pathway deficiencies and gaining practical teaching strategies.

A high level of individual mentoring and support is available to trainees throughout the programme which provides an excellent basis for identifying and addressing individual strengths and weaknesses and introducing supplementary resources and

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activities. Open assessment timeframes allow for flexibility, although this can result in a clustering of assessments at course end, particularly for module one.

Since the previous EER, Seabrook has made a number of changes to the programme design and delivery to better match the needs of learners and to improve learning outcomes. One example is the review and relaunch of module three in 2014 (previously entirely comprising self-directed learning), introducing regular group sessions and providing for oral presentations as well as written assignments. Providing these opportunities for trainees to share information and learn from each other has been very effective in increasing motivation and achievement. Seabrook has been responsive to the needs of geographically dispersed trainees, delivering lectures for module one in 2015 and providing supervision for teaching practicums in two other South Island centres.

Seabrook makes ongoing changes and improvements to the programme in response to trainee feedback. Evidence was provided of teaching and learning resources being reviewed and updated to reflect new research, curriculum developments and practical teaching strategies. In these ways, Seabrook is ensuring the ongoing relevance and usefulness of the teacher training programme. In previous years, trainee feedback has been gathered through surveys at the conclusion of each module. Seabrook reports that survey forms have not been completed for 2015 and 2016. It was not clear to the evaluators why this was the case, and Seabrook has confirmed its intention to review its survey approach.

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**.

Trainees benefit from the expertise of a small team of specialist staff with relevant qualifications and extensive experience as assessors and/or teachers of children with SLD. This team works collaboratively, communicating regularly on aspects of the programme and trainee progress. The lecturers maintain the currency of their knowledge through participating in regular professional development and engaging with research through Seabrook workshops, attendance at conferences and membership of relevant associations. There is good evidence of an active community of practice involving all Seabrook staff, which underpins and strengthens the teacher training programme.

Trainees are engaged with their learning and speak highly of their lecturers. The evaluators also heard positive feedback about the interactive nature of the small classes, the opportunities to learn in a variety of contexts (for example, by observing expert teachers working with children) and the useful and comprehensive feedback provided on their progress. One graduate reported that her programme notes and the written feedback on her assessments had proved so valuable she had retained them and referred to them subsequently as an ongoing resource.

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Seabrook reports a number of ways in which teaching effectiveness is monitored, in addition to tracking of trainee progress and feedback. These include regular co-teaching for several units of study and occasional peer observations (both formal and informal). Oral presentations are jointly marked by two staff. Some internal moderation processes are in place to ensure that assessment is fair and consistent. These include pre- and post-assessment of course materials and assessment activities for newly developed and/or significantly changed content, and a process for moderation of assessments which the marker has identified as marginal (pass or fail). However, these processes are not well documented. A more systematic approach to moderation and to reviewing teacher performance overall would provide greater assurance of overall teacher 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 **Good**.

Trainees receive excellent guidance and support which is fully integrated into the teaching programme. Regular tutorials and mentoring ensures a high level of individual attention. Lecturers are accessible and approachable. Trainees receive constructive feedback, both written and verbal, which identifies areas for further development. Additional support, including resources, is provided, sometimes beyond the completion of the study programme, particularly for practical teaching strategies. Current and ex-trainees reported the importance of this encouragement and guidance for building their confidence as they acquire practical skills for working with children and families.

Seabrook seeks information on trainees' objectives prior to enrolment. A trainee information pack, which is updated annually, provides clear information on the academic requirements of the programme, including entry and progression criteria and the time commitment for each module. Seabrook has a selection process for module two and restricts the award of the practising certificate to registered teachers and those trainees who demonstrate the required attributes and abilities to succeed as SLD teachers.

Seabrook staff report that they regularly share information on trainee progress and learning needs, and there was some evidence of this provided in emails and meeting minutes. In general, however, there is a reliance on informal processes (largely undocumented) and staff commitment to providing individual support to their trainees.

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 **Adequate**.

Seabrook's teacher training is integrated with the rest of its activities and contributes to Seabrook achieving its wider vision for supporting people with SLD and their families. One measure of this is having adequate teachers to meet the need for specialist teachers of children with SLD (monitored via waiting lists). The clinical director reports regularly to a trust board on key issues and provides effective leadership to the teacher training team. Staff feel valued and enjoy working as part of a collaborative team of professionals with a shared vision.

Despite limited funding, adequate resources are provided to support teaching and learning, including some funded professional development. A recently refurbished building provides a pleasant base for the programme. However, it appears that the building repairs (spread over six months) caused some disruption to the PTE's operations. Limited record-keeping reflects the time constraints for staff and also the lack of perceived value of documentation. The evaluators noted several important gaps, including the gathering and collation of learner feedback and evidence of ongoing internal moderation.

Other academic processes that underpin educational performance are generally fit-for-purpose and, although largely undocumented, triangulated evidence was available of their occurring. Examples include ongoing programme review and improvement, recording and monitoring learner achievement, and ongoing professional development for lecturers.

Evidence gathered during the EER indicates that Seabrook is a flexible and responsive organisation, experiencing steady demand for its training and delivering highly valued outcomes for trainees and other stakeholders. The director described appropriate steps taken to ensure Seabrook's compliance with registration, accreditation and other regulatory requirements. The evaluators also noted a practical commitment to ongoing review and improvement in relation to educational performance. Since the previous EER, priorities for the teacher training have been identified and appropriate changes have been implemented which have resulted in meaningful improvements. However, the body of evidence needs strengthening, particularly in relation to key processes underpinning educational performance (including programme review, monitoring teaching effectiveness and internal moderation) and the quality of self-assessment information (including feedback from trainees and other key stakeholders).

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 **Adequate**.

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

NZQA recommends that Seabrook:

- Strengthen processes for regularly involving staff in self-assessment, including sharing information, identifying improvements and monitoring their impact.
- Develop and implement improved processes for gathering and recording feedback from trainees and other key stakeholders as a basis for evaluating how well the teacher training programme is meeting needs and identifying areas for improvement.
- Develop more systematic approaches to internal moderation processes and record-keeping, to strengthen the evidence of consistent assessment practice and valid learner achievement.
- Strengthen processes for monitoring teaching effectiveness for all lecturing staff on a regular basis.

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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