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# External Evaluation and Review Report

Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and  
Educational Centre Trust (trading as  
Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and  
Educational Centre)

Date of report: 29 June 2021

# About Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre Trust (trading as Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre)

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*The Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre (TSB<sup>1</sup> TOPEC or TOPEC) is a registered charity set up by the Taranaki Secondary Schools and collaborating service groups specifically to provide training in outdoor pursuits and leadership. The majority of its learners are secondary school students studying outdoor education alongside their secondary schooling (3+2 model).*

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Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	11 Hydro Road, New Plymouth
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 27 equivalent full-time students
Number of staff:	Four full-time and five part-time
TEO profile:	See <a href="#">TOPEC</a> on the NZQA website
Last EER outcome:	In 2019, NZQA was Confident in TOPEC's educational performance and Not Yet Confident in its capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Experiences (Level 3)</li><li>• New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Leadership (Level 4)</li></ul>
MoE number:	8091
NZQA reference:	C45322
Dates of EER visit:	5 and 6 May 2021

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<sup>1</sup> Taranaki Schools Board

# Summary of Results

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*TOPEC demonstrated much improved and comprehensive self-assessment practices, which inform and guide their operations and decisions. Achievement is high and outcomes to students and other stakeholders are positive.*

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## **Highly Confident in educational performance**

TOPEC has undergone major improvements in systems and practices, and has comprehensively addressed all recommendations from the previous EER (2019).

Even with the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, achievement in the last two years has been high, including that of Māori and under-25 students. TOPEC delivers programmes that provide vital and transferrable life skills to its students, who are mostly youth. Aside from gained know-how in outdoor activities, and heightened awareness in health and safety and risk management, there is evidence of the overall positive impact of TOPEC in the students' life direction and mindset.

## **Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment**

Programme design and delivery is effective for student learning and engagement. External moderation results are positive, and the internal moderation system is robust. The wrap-around pastoral care and support provided to students contributes to their motivation for learning. TOPEC is mindful of the different learning styles of students, and needs identified were quickly addressed.

The organisation's purpose and direction is clear. The management team is strong and has the board's confidence in its leadership. There is evidence of a board that is engaged with the PTE. Staff members are qualified and experienced in the industry, and feel valued in their job.

There is good management of key compliance responsibilities.

# Key evaluation question findings<sup>2</sup>

## 1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Despite the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, TOPEC has achieved a high completion rate in its programmes. The overall course completion rate in 2019 was 90 per cent (versus its internal target of 85 per cent), and 84 per cent in 2020 (versus its moving aspirational internal target of 90 per cent). The course completion rate for the level 3 outdoor experience programme was 90 per cent (2019) and 70 per cent (2020), while the level 4 outdoor leadership programme was 83 per cent (2020). The recently approved Pest Eradication and Bush Survival Training Scheme had a 100 per cent completion rate (2020). Student retention, also closely monitored and analysed by TOPEC, has exceeded set targets.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>Achievement is regularly monitored, and underlying factors for non-achievement and withdrawals are well-understood. This includes personal concerns not within the PTE's control, changes and anxiety brought about by the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic (which saw some students leaving mainstream schooling; some were not able to manage remote/online learning), and students finding jobs.</p> <p>There is generally high course completions for Māori and under-25 students, and the target participation rate for these groups has always been exceeded. There is a low percentage of Pasifika in the region, thus the target participation rate for this ethnic group is low. One of TOPEC's strategic priorities is to continuously encourage engagement by all priority learners, through liaising with secondary schools, sporting codes, iwi and institutions.</p> <p>Positive external moderation results, and sound internal moderation systems, underpin achievement.</p>

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

<sup>3</sup> Student retention was 10 in 2019 (target: eight) and nine in 2020 (target: eight).

	Students gain vital skills in their programme. They grow in confidence and maturity, and gain life and transferrable skills such as heightened awareness of health and safety, risk management, time management, interpersonal and people skills, teamwork, collaboration, communication and leadership skills. TOPEC provides the students with opportunities to overcome personal limitations and fears, for example water anxiety and speaking in a group, and the chance to lead with positive outcomes for others.
Conclusion:	TOPEC has high course completion rates and students gain vital skills and knowledge. Achievement is regularly monitored and the factors underlying achievement are well-understood.

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

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TOPEC provides vital outcomes to students. Aside from the technical knowledge of outdoor pursuits and activities, students gain useful skills as discussed in 1.1. There is feedback from students that their wellbeing, maturity and confidence improved at TOPEC, and that their life direction was positively influenced by their time at the PTE. Students stated that the skills and knowledge gained at TOPEC gave them a good foundation for their eventual employment, in particular in adventure tourism, building apprenticeships, electrician apprenticeships, hospitality, the recreation and sports industry, and farming.</p> <p>TOPEC sets a target for student progression to higher study in outdoor education and adventure tourism, and this has always been met.<sup>4</sup> Study destinations include polytechnics, teacher training, and the TOPEC level 4 programme.</p> <p>TOPEC's monitoring and analysis of graduate destination data is comprehensive and provides a good understanding of where the students go and how the skills and knowledge gained at TOPEC are used. Feedback from employers and secondary schools supports the data gathered.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Forty per cent of level 3 students progressed to higher-level study in 2019, and 55 per cent in 2020 (versus the 35 per cent target).

	TOPEC received a satisfactory result in NZQA's consistency review for the level 3 focus area programme.
Conclusion:	TOPEC provides valuable outcomes to students, the community and relevant stakeholders. Comprehensive self-assessment in this area provides TOPEC with a good understanding of its valued outcomes.

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

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TOPEC consults its stakeholders to ensure that the programme structures and content are relevant to students' needs and those of other relevant stakeholders. TOPEC has been proactive in seeking feedback from the industry through its advisory group, which is a recent initiative.</p> <p>The blended delivery of theory and practical components enables the students to be highly engaged in the programmes and is effective in cementing their learning. There is an opportunity for students to provide feedback about the programme through the regular one-on-one check-in sessions with tutors, and through the end-of-course survey, which has been made more structured and meaningful compared with the informal practice a few years back. Student feedback, along with tutors' and other stakeholders' feedback, feeds into the annual programme review to ensure relevance and currency. A more thorough review was conducted in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic and changes affecting the sector.</p> <p>TOPEC provides a good learning environment with sufficient resources, recently upgraded facilities and well-qualified, industry-active tutors and staff. The internal moderation process is sound, and external moderation results are positive. Learning tasks and activities, along with assessments, are appropriate and aligned with the programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>Students are provided with useful, timely feedback on their performance and progress. There is also a student-tutor debrief for each practical activity, which ensures learning is reinforced and any issues or queries are promptly addressed. Students'</p>

	<p>learning hours, including practical hours, are monitored and logged to ensure the correct learning hours are met.</p> <p>Consistency in programme delivery, and shared understanding of student progress and/or concerns, is ensured through the morning toolbox, a daily meeting among TOPEC staff members.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Programmes are designed and delivered in a way that is engaging to students and effective in reinforcing their learning. All relevant stakeholders have input into programme review which ensures relevance and currency.</p>

#### 1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TOPEC ensures that the learning environment is inclusive and has a positive effect on student wellbeing. The wrap-around pastoral care benefits not only students' academic progress, but also their overall mindset and life direction.</p> <p>The nature of the programme, where students and tutors experience the thrill and challenges of the outdoors together, leads to trust and positive connections between them. This translates into mutual respect and teachers being a positive influence on the students. Students are well-supported academically; for example, extra tuition is provided to those needing it (such as ESOL<sup>5</sup> students wanting to confirm their understanding of instructions), extra time is allowed for practical tasks, flexibility is given to students who are busy with school exams, and oral assessments are an option for those with difficulties in writing.</p> <p>During the Covid-19 lockdowns, students moved to online theoretical learning, and reported that they received regular communications with their teachers by phone and/or Zoom.</p> <p>Aside from the regular check-ins from teachers, students are scheduled for a one-on-one session with them once a term, where learning goals are being reviewed, and feedback on the course and the support they receive is gathered.</p>

<sup>5</sup> English for Speakers of Other Languages

Conclusion:	Students are well-supported by the teachers in both academic and personal matters. Self-assessment practices in this area are effective and contribute to ongoing improvement.
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### 1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TOPEC has a clear organisational purpose and direction, and is led by a forward-thinking and entrepreneurial management team. The director is considered by the outdoor industry as an expert, and is well-networked. The leader of education has expertise in education matters and spearheaded the system improvements over the last two years. Together, their leadership earned the confidence of the TOPEC board. There is evidence of a good balance between innovation and continuity. There is an endeavour to build a more sustainable business model that is not reliant solely on secondary school funding, with the initiative to diversify and widen the scope of programme/training scheme offerings.</p> <p>There is evidence of a more engaged board, with regular communication becoming more frequent. Board members have individual portfolios and better understanding of the educational arm of the organisation, and are regularly informed of key areas, such as student achievement, outcomes, programme management, and health and safety. TOPEC is aware that with all current board members having an education background, there is a need to diversify its membership to include people with other relevant skills, such as entrepreneurial or strategic skills. This is currently being looked at.</p> <p>TOPEC has qualified and industry-experienced teachers. Staff feel valued and are provided with flexibility and sufficient opportunities to develop professionally. During the Covid-19 lockdowns, staff were assured of continuous tenure.</p> <p>The organisation has comprehensively and effectively addressed all recommendations from the previous EER.</p>

Conclusion:	The governance and management team provides a culture and system that supports educational achievement. Self-assessment practices inform key decisions.
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## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	<b>Good</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Good</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>With the director having ultimate oversight, TOPEC meets all its key compliance responsibilities, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive incident and accident reporting.</li> <li>• Comprehensive health and safety systems. All staff and students are well-informed of the organisation’s safety operating procedures. There are systems in place to ensure risk is mitigated before any outdoor activity.</li> <li>• Well-trained and qualified staff members. All staff have appropriate credentials in outdoor education, and are trained in health and safety systems.</li> <li>• Police vetting of all staff. TOPEC also ensures that any casual visitors who deal with students are accompanied by a staff member.</li> <li>• Programmes are delivered as per NZQA approval, including learning outcomes, learning activities and required learning hours.</li> <li>• WorkSafe (Adventure Mark) accreditation.</li> <li>• Compliance accountabilities with the relevant industry training organisation, as well as with the Tertiary Education Commission.</li> <li>• Responsibilities under the interim domestic Code are all met.</li> </ul> <p>While there was evidence of late credit reporting in 2019, when partner secondary schools reported credits on behalf of TOPEC, this has improved significantly and the PTE has had timely credit reporting for the last two years. It is recommended that the responsibility to report credits on time be clearly communicated to partner secondary schools.</p>

	Until the EER, TOPEC was not aware of the requirement for governing members to submit Fit and Proper Person and Conflict of Interest Forms. These were actioned following the EER.
Conclusion:	Key compliance accountabilities have been met. Self-assessment practices surrounding compliance are continuously improving.

## Focus Areas

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

### 2.1 Focus area: New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Experiences (Level 3) New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Experience (Level 3)

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>

### 2.2 Focus area: New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Leadership (Level 4)

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>

## 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 TOPEC:

- continue with its plans to diversify membership of the board, to include people with other relevant backgrounds aside from education.
- clearly state in the contracts with partner secondary schools that credits must be reported to NZQA within the 90-day timeframe.

## 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

## 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 fraud<sup>6</sup>
- 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.

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<sup>6</sup> 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 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.*

*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 including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

*The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.*

*In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, training schemes 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 2016. 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)). 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/>.*

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E [qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz)

[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)