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Report of External Evaluation and Review

ACTS Institute of New Zealand

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 3 May 2017

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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:	ACTS Institute of New Zealand
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	21 October 1991
Location:	65 Dudley Street, Lower Hutt, Wellington
Delivery sites:	All courses are held at the above site.
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Certificate in Employment Skills (Level 1) credits 60• National Certificate in Computing (Level 2) credits 43• National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) (Level 1 and 2)
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funded Youth Guarantee programme, 21 enrolled in 2016. At least half of these learners are Māori; a small proportion are Pasifika. Ministry of Social Development Sole Employment Placement Scheme, 50 clients 2016 Kiwiskills Courses, 80 participants in 2016
Number of staff:	Three full-time and one part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	Employment and computing skills to level 2

Distinctive characteristics: ACTS is an established education, employment and training organisation founded on strong Christian values and has been in operation for over 20 years as a PTE. ACTS has a small, close-knit governance, management and staff structure.

Recent significant changes: Over the last two years ACTS has faced a number and range of significant events and changes.

- Staffing: the general manager, a key staff member has reduced involvement with the PTE for the last two years. A contracted tutor with literacy and numeracy expertise left the organisation in April 2015 and a fulltime administrator in early 2017. Another fulltime staff position was made redundant following an organisation restructure. A fulltime tutor was employed in 2014 and an operations manager position was developed in mid-2016.
- Programmes: two new programmes have been offered since the previous external evaluation and review (EER). A pilot programme (Ignite) for the Ministry of Social Development ran once in 2015 and once in 2016, and Kiwiskills courses have been offered over two terms in 2016.
- Funding: the TEC reduced funding for Youth Guarantee programmes, although overall funding is guaranteed until the end of 2017. There was a temporary stop in funding from the Ministry of Social Development for six months; funding has been re-established and confirmed until mid-2017.

Previous quality assurance history: The previous EER was conducted in February 2013. At that visit, NZQA was Confident in ACTS' educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

The latest NZQA moderation report, dated 23 November 2016, shows that ACTS has consistently met the standard for core skills, computing and business units for the last three years. For two years assessor judgements were not upheld for two numeracy unit standards. NZQA Tertiary Assessment and Moderation has

noted that when a unit has not met the required standard the following year, the judgements have been upheld, therefore ACTS is correcting and improving the issues identified.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER included one focus area: Youth Guarantee programmes. Within this focus area learners are able to gain unit standards to achieve NCEA (Level 1 and 2) and study towards:

- National Certificate in Employment Skills (Level 1)
- National Certificate in Computing (Level 2)

Learners are in full-time study over 42 weeks and aged between 15 and 19 years. A significant proportion of ACTS' resources and staff are focused on these learners.

The other programmes offered that were not selected include the Ministry of Social Development Sole Employment Placement Scheme, which supports sole parents with job seeking and employment. Four workshops are delivered and coaching visits and support are provided. Three Kiwiskills courses are funded by 20/20 Communications through the Lotteries Commission, with 80 participants having enrolled at the time of the EER. A facilitator runs two of the three Kiwiskills courses. Both are completed over two days in a classroom environment. The third course is online. ACTS provides the venue and access to computers, and a tutor is available for support on an as-needs basis.

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.

The evaluation team of two visited ACTS' office over two days. Interviews were conducted with the ACTS board chair, operations manager, general manager, four students and tutor. Phone interviews were conducted with two stakeholders. In addition to the documents provided for the EER scoping exercise, the EER team sighted and was provided with various documents including meeting minutes of the board of trustees, a report to the board, operational policies, learner and stakeholder surveys conducted in 2016, and a variety of data relating to student progress, achievement and destinations.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the educational performance of **ACTS Institute of New Zealand**.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **ACTS Institute of New Zealand**.

ACTS is a small organisation which has undergone a range of significant changes in the past two years to its funding, programme delivery and staffing. These changes have had a negative impact on the organisation's capability in self-assessment and educational performance – specifically Youth Guarantee programme achievement, which has declined. The 2016 TEC provisional results indicate that course and qualification completions have declined by approximately 18 per cent on the previous two years' results for all learners. Course, qualification and retention results for Māori, over half of ACTS' learners are significantly below non-Māori learners.

ACTS has some sound policies, processes and practices which have been in place for some time. However, these have not always been consistently or reliably implemented. Where there was evidence of processes actioned, the quality of the information collected is variable. ACTS' approach to reviewing the data is not encouraging a broad or layered enquiry to better inform changes. An example was the removal of the learner workbook following negative learner survey feedback. However, the learners interviewed said they found the workbooks useful – the problem was the total reliance on the workbooks and what they actually wanted was a varied delivery style to be more effective.

ACTS' staff and board are committed to their learners, value and support each other, and are transparent in acknowledging the difficulties facing the organisation. ACTS has some improvement strategies planned to address areas that require improvement, such as building the capability in teaching and self-assessment of staff. Some of these plans are still in initial stages and others are not yet well formed. It is important to put the plans into action to prevent any further decline in educational performance and move the organisation forward.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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

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

Within the primary training that ACTS delivers – the Youth Guarantee programme – rates of achievement declined in 2016. In 2014 and 2015 this programme consistently performed at or just above the TEC required educational performance indicators, specifically course completions, qualification completions, and student retention. The 2016 provisional results show a marked decline in course and qualification completion. The final results are still to be confirmed (by mid-2017), but both ACTS and the TEC agree that there is unlikely to be much movement in the current provisional result. The 2016 provisional results indicate course completions have reduced by 18 per cent, and 17 per cent for qualification completions on the previous two years' results,

Māori learners make up more than half the Youth Guarantee enrolments and achieved at a lower rate than non-Māori on all TEC educational performance indicators in 2014 and 2015. The 2016 provisional results are significantly below non-Māori learners for course and qualification completions, and student retention has fallen below 20 per cent.² The rating of Adequate for this key evaluation question reflects that these results represent one year of reduced results.

ACTS has been too slow to identify and respond to educational performance issues that affect achievement such as unit standard achievement and progress. Nor have these factors been monitored closely enough, and internal reporting of performance, including to the board, has been overly positive.

Other outcomes – for the Sole Employment Placement Course and Kiwiskills courses – have met or are close to meeting contracted expectations of delivery. The only exception is in the lower than anticipated number of enrolments of clients and participants. While there were some good anecdotal comments about the development and progress during and post-course for some individual learners, this was not explored or evidenced by ACTS for all learners. The same could also apply to all courses.

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

² The number of Pasifika learners is very small.

ACTS needs to review current monitoring and reporting processes and implement these consistently. This is important as 2016 is only one year of declining results, and strengthening the self-assessment activities and capability of staff to understand the significance of the indicators on achievement may halt this recent decline.

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

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

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

ACTS aligns itself to the Tertiary Education Strategy priorities regarding increasing Māori and under 25-year-old educational participation and supporting learners into tertiary education. Learners with limited educational success prior to engaging with ACTS, and who successfully complete, are gaining useful foundation qualifications and in some cases NCEA level 1 and level 2, to support their progress to further training and employment. As discussed in Findings 1.1, compared with the previous two years, the 2016 results have declined for these TEC priority groups.

ACTS reports that learners improve their literacy and numeracy skills over the duration of the programme. This is important as ACTS estimates that 80 per cent of all learners have low literacy and numeracy levels on entry. Although most learners undergo literacy and numeracy testing at entry, using the TEC's online assessment tool, analysis of the reassessment results is not occurring to confirm the anecdotal improvement and extent of the outcomes ACTS believes may be occurring. Strengthening the evidence around this outcome would be beneficial for both ACTS and the learners.

The PTE tracks learners who have continued on to higher education or employment, whether or not they successfully completed the Youth Guarantee programme. The rate and type of progression was collated on site for the evaluators, who explored this data with ACTS staff and determined that approximately half of the Youth Guarantee learners have positive outcomes. Collation of these outcomes and success beyond this initial measure is not explored.

Stakeholder surveys are carried out, but there are limited responses to derive meaningful information for analysis. ACTS needs to implement its processes and extend the analysis and enquiry of data and information collected to show evidence of the value and benefits of their training.

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

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

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

Youth Guarantee programme teaching, learning and pre-moderated assessment resources are created externally. ACTS' tutor relies heavily on these materials for programme delivery and assessment. External moderation by NZQA indicates that assessor judgements over the past three years have been upheld except for literacy and numeracy units which have been problematic for many assessors. Where assessment judgements have not been upheld, changes have been made by ACTS to address this, and subsequent post-moderation of these units have met requirements. This shows that ACTS is correcting and improving the issues identified.

Learner surveys, peer review and the more recent end-of-programme evaluations have reinforced ACTS' staff view of the need to vary and improve the teaching delivery and resources. This self-assessment information is being used and acted on. ACTS has responded by supplementing the handbook with other activities and focusing on learners' individual learning preference. At the time of the EER the impact of this change was not evident, students interviewed have not found the changes to be a useful alternative or sufficiently different to the previous teaching style. The additional extracurricular activities have also not been developed adequately to clearly link the learning and teaching.

The tutor achieved an adult teaching qualification in 2016, and has taken on further training and support through enrolment in a literacy and numeracy qualification. The intention to further build capability is clear, and discussions include the intention to better mentor the tutor and engage a consultant to support the tutor to improve the achievement of Māori learners. The implementation of these strategies and monitoring how well learners' educational needs are identified and met are important given the recent decline in achievement. This is particularly the case for Māori learners, and the recognised high literacy and numeracy needs of ACTS' learners.

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

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

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

ACTS has been providing training to youth and adults for many years and is well aware of the needs of Youth Guarantee learners and the support they may require. Practical support such as providing breakfast every morning, tea and coffee and lunch on Fridays are appreciated by the learners. The prompt payment of the travel allowance ensures ongoing access to the free training. ACTS works closely with a local community youth service who professionally support some of ACTS' learners and encourages and enables them to attend ACTS. ACTS provides a comfortable and welcoming environment in which to study.

ACTS creates individual learning plans with goals to meet the needs of each learner. Progress is considered per individual per unit, attendance is monitored and achievement reported. Although these activities occur and the results are recorded, either the data is not closely scrutinised or there is not a clear understanding of the significance of the potential impact when the indicators are not being met. ACTS needs to revisit these activities and link targets or benchmarks to effective interventions that will better support learners. Currently ACTS is looking to recruit a person specifically to provide support for the learners in the Youth Guarantee programme, which the evaluators agree is a sound initiative.

Learners commented that they had a genuine level of respect for their tutors, who they said took the time to support them, not only in matters related to their course of study but also when some of the learners had personal problems.

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

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

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

ACTS has an experienced board which has been engaged with the PTE over many years. The governance group has a clear vision and the purpose is clear, built on the personal experience of the trustees and their commitment to youth and unemployed adults. The direction of the PTE is currently under consideration in light of the more recent and significant internal changes, staffing and programmes, and the impact of external factors such as changes to TEC and Ministry of Social Development funding (see introduction).

The board is responding to mitigate the impact of the funding changes. An example is the review of the organisation which occurred after the Ministry of Social

Development changes to ACTS' contract. The review led to the disestablishment of one position and a restructure of the organisation. The board ensures the PTE is well resourced and is supporting the development of staff, specifically the tutor and the operations manager who are both new to education. This support is important as the longstanding staff member with substantial experience in education has had reduced involvement with the PTE over the past two years and a contracted part-time tutor who left the PTE had expertise in literacy and numeracy, a skill-set which has not been replicated. However, the board has been slow to identify and respond to indicators that the mentoring arrangement in place has not been sufficient to ensure ongoing effective management of the PTE and outcomes for learners in 2016.

Reporting by management to the board was kept up to date but they believe the forecasting of achievements proved to be overly optimistic and did not adequately alert them to declining achievement. Plans to reintroduce more formal, regular monitoring and reporting on key areas such as achievement and progress of contractual requirements is a sound decision. The board chair recognises there will need to be an increase in the level of monitoring and rapid intervention required by board members, some of whom were anticipating stepping down in the very near future. This highlights the need to consider the current membership, skill-set and commitment for the medium to longer-term to continue to invest, resource and guide the PTE.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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

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

ACTS is governed by a board who are longstanding members and who are aware of compliance accountabilities. Expertise such as financial advice is bought in as required. ACTS is a member of Independent Tertiary Education New Zealand, which is useful to keep up to date with changes affecting PTEs.

ACTS' quality management system has been recently reviewed and updated, and policies and processes are sufficient and relevant for the size of the organisation. However, not all changes were copied correctly across documentation.

Programme delivery is occurring as per the original programme approval, and Type 2 changes have been approved by NZQA as required. ACTS is also looking to develop new programmes as the current programmes will expire at the end of 2017.

ACTS has been affected by the recent earthquakes with cracks and leaks to the building and roof, and some damage to equipment and resources such as

computers. An engineer's report has deemed the building structurally sound, and a reassessment has occurred after reasonably sized aftershocks.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Youth Guarantee programmes

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that ACTS Institute of New Zealand:

- Build capability in staff to better understand educational performance and self-assessment, specifically in regards to Youth Guarantee programme achievement.
- Reliably implement ACTS' sound policies, processes and practices.
- Extend the analysis and enquiry of data and meaningful information collected.
- Implement strategies indicated within this report – some of which are planned, but not yet well formed.

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/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz