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External Evaluation and Review Report

Activate Training Centre Limited
trading as ATC New Zealand

Date of report: 13 June 2019

About Activate Training Centre Limited trading as ATC New Zealand

ATC is a faith-based organisation offering level 1 foundation programmes through to degree programmes in performance music, counselling, leadership, business, early childhood education and information technology. Its mission is 'changing lives through learning'.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	21 Ruakura Road, Hamilton East, Hamilton. ATC also has campuses in Auckland and Christchurch.
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 2015 (1226); 2016 (1009); 2017 (1021); 2018 (950) In 2018, 32 per cent of ATC's 950 enrolled domestic learners identified as Māori, and 8.7 per cent as Pasifika. International: 2015 (one); 2016 (eight); 2017 (69); 2018 (228) In 2018, international students were 100 per cent Asian (mainly Indian and Filipino, some Japanese and Sri Lankan)
Number of staff:	86 full-time equivalents and 45 part-time
TEO profile:	See: NZQA – Activate Training Centre Limited ATC is a faith-based organisation which operates on Christian values to achieve its mission of changing lives through learning.
Last EER outcome:	Confident in educational performance Confident in capability in self-assessment
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand Certificate in Foundation Skills (Level 1)• New Zealand Certificate in Business

(Administration and Technology) (Level 3)

- Diploma in Web Development and Design (Level 5)
- Bachelor of Counselling (Level 7)
- International student support and wellbeing

MoE number: 8895

NZQA reference: C33584

Dates of EER visit: 5-8 March 2019

Summary of Results

ATC's educational performance and capability in self-assessment are generally strong. ATC responds well to the learning and wellbeing needs of all its students. Stakeholder relationships are strong, contributing to positive outcomes for students. Governance and management provide effective leadership to the organisation.

Confident in educational performance

- ATC has a clear purpose and direction which is led well by the governance and management team. The values-based approach is a strength of the organisation and was evident in the culture of the staff.
- ATC provides a range of support processes to meet the wellbeing and academic needs of all students including international, Māori and Pasifika.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Student achievement is generally good across the organisation. Achievement for priority learners needs strengthening which ATC is aware of and has improvement activities in place as a result of its own self-assessment processes.
- ATC is well connected to its communities, resulting in student access to a range of social services; industry input into programme design; and graduate employment.
- Staff are involved in programme reviews, team evaluation reports, and continuous improvement meetings which is strengthening self-assessment practice across the organisation. Some of the self-assessment activities are recent and yet to be fully embedded in the organisation.
- ATC has effective processes in place for managing compliance, academic quality and strategic risk.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>ATC has continued its commitment to changing lives through learning by investing in changes that ensure students have the best opportunity to succeed. Changes include improved internal reporting and monitoring of achievement data by management; investment in student support for specific learners, e.g. Māori and international; and trialling different teaching and learning strategies. Changes have also been made to programmes with low enrolments and completions.</p> <p>In this context of change, course completion rates overall have remained relatively consistent over the past four years: 2015 (71 per cent); 2016 (71 per cent); 2017 (73 per cent) and 2018 (74 per cent, provisional). However, management acknowledges that these rates are lower than internal and external expectations, particularly for Māori² and Pasifika students. More inquiry and action is underway to improve performance for priority learners.</p> <p>Student achievement by programme is monitored weekly by an enrolment and outcomes committee chaired by the chief executive. Heads of school are encouraged to facilitate and report on monthly continuous improvement meetings. These meetings are opportunities for staff to discuss and draw meaning from a range of data (including achievement data, student surveys and stakeholder feedback) to identify areas for improvement that lead to better outcomes for students.</p>
Conclusion:	ATC educational performance is generally strong. ATC is monitoring and analysing student achievement regularly and has the capability and systems to identify and action any areas for continuous improvement.

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 Māori student course completions SAC funded: 2015 (56%) 2016 (61%) 2017 (74%).
Pacific student course completions SAC funded: 2015 (59%) 2016 (64%) 2017 (69%).

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Gathering and self-assessing convincing valued outcomes data has improved since the last EER. ATC has recently introduced graduate outcome and destination surveys to provide a whole-of-organisation perspective on how well students are using their skills and knowledge in the workplace and/or community. Practices such as exit interviews for students and tutor engagement with industry and local advisory groups provide useful data that informs continuous improvement meetings.</p> <p>The focus area programmes in particular show good evidence that student skills and knowledge are well aligned to industry employer needs (e.g. counselling and web design) and to furthering education (e.g. foundation and business information and technology).</p> <p>Niche programmes such as the New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Christian Leadership), Bachelor of Music (Contemporary Christian Music), and Bachelor of Counselling continue to be offered despite low numbers. ATC knows through its own self-assessment that graduates use their skills and knowledge gained through these programmes to enhance their own lives and to support the communities they work and live within.</p>
Conclusion:	ATC graduates are providing value to their communities, demonstrated through a range of organisational and programme evidence gathered from graduates and stakeholders. Capability to use outcome data to inform self-assessment and continuous improvement across the organisation is developing.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Meeting the needs of stakeholders through the design and delivery of programmes is a strength of ATC. Local advisory group feedback and systematic programme reviews by tutors show programme relevance to students and communities. ATC is engaging meaningfully with its most important stakeholders and ensuring their concerns are heard and, where appropriate, actioned. Evidence of how feedback from stakeholders has informed programme design was demonstrated.</p> <p>Learning environments and activities are engaging and accommodating of students with different educational backgrounds and experiences. Opportunities for workplace visits (foundation skills), placements (counselling), and project-based learning (web design) provide students with the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge in different ways.</p> <p>Students are provided with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through written work, project work and oral presentations. Quality assessment practice is supported by internal moderation processes. External moderation of NZQA managed unit standards is mostly satisfactory however there are areas that required immediate improvement (refer 1.6). Tutors, specifically those working with large cohorts of international students, have effective systems and processes in place for managing plagiarism and the authenticity of student work.</p>
Conclusion:	ATC's performance in ensuring its programmes match the needs of its students and stakeholders is exceptional. This is evidenced by meaningful engagement with stakeholders and a genuine commitment to making changes that lead to improvements.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>ATC provides a holistic approach to supporting students to achieve success. Support includes health care (including Activate Health, a medical clinic based at the Hamilton campus), social activities (campus BBQs), counselling services, hoodies and uniforms, transport subsidies and other supports as needed to remove barriers that might impact on student learning.</p> <p>In terms of academic and pastoral care, ATC has a mixed model of support that varies depending on the greatest need. For example, in response to the growth of international students, dedicated pastoral and academic support has been provided at the East Tamaki campus. Support for Māori students has also been increased to help the organisation to improve Māori student achievement. Ongoing academic and pastoral support to all students is provided by teaching staff.</p> <p>A flipped classroom³ and a new flexible learning environment is being trialled and monitored for impacts on student engagement and achievement, especially in the foundation programme (identified as an area where innovative responses were required to lift youth engagement and achievement).</p> <p>Students generally feel well supported with appropriate resources; timely and useful assessment feedback; opportunities to provide feedback on their learning experience; and opportunities to engage with tutors, graduates and industry (where relevant) to improve their learning.</p>
Conclusion:	ATC's performance in ensuring it effectively supports and involves students in their learning is exceptional. ATC staff know their students well and are effectively responding to the wellbeing needs of the students individually and collectively.

³ Flipped classroom is a blended delivery model where learners receive content out of class time and class time is used for collaboration, socialisation and assessment. Source: ATC Learning Design Strategy 2016

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>ATC actively gives daily expression to its mission statement and values evident in the testimonies of students, graduates and stakeholders, who felt ATC created a welcoming learning environment where students are well supported to achieve success in their lives.</p> <p>The governance body has a diverse range of capability well suited to the needs of the PTE. Governance and management are engaged with, and have a good understanding of, educational performance. Decisions regarding the future of the PTE and resourcing are well informed. ATC has managed well stakeholders' need for niche programmes that align with its intent as a faith-based organisation; areas of growth specifically in the area of international students; and its sustainability and viability as an organisation. ATC is always looking forward and making informed strategic decisions.</p> <p>Since the last EER there have been a number of changes, including a new national manager; student success manager; new heads of school; new tutors; and new programmes (resulting from the tertiary review of qualifications). How well the new staff are settling into their roles and meeting expectations will need close monitoring by senior management.</p> <p>ATC has clear expectations around professional development and training for staff. Staff surveys are conducted annually and, where needed, actions are undertaken in response.</p> <p>Self-assessment capability is improving across the organisation as a result of improved systems, processes and ongoing mentoring support to staff on how best to use a range of data to inform continuous improvement.</p>
Conclusion:	ATC governance and management effectively support educational achievement. Self-assessment capability is generally strong across the organisation, supported by effective processes and practices that encourage continuous improvement.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>ATC takes a values-based approach to compliance, where creating a culture of integrity, honesty and putting the needs of the student at the centre is modelled and highly valued, in addition to ensuring compliance responsibilities are met.</p> <p>The academic and quality, and audit and risk committees work well to ensure ATC is following its own policies and procedures for managing quality and risk.</p> <p>Risks are identified, analysed and monitored by senior management; and compliance monitoring is shared across the management team and committees rather than divested to one person. Matters relating to NZQA and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) compliance are centralised to ensure consistent, expert advice and support is provided to all staff.</p> <p>In November 2018, ATC's accreditation to provide the New Zealand Diploma in Business (Leadership and Management) (Level 5) was withdrawn by NZQA because of ongoing assessment issues. ATC has made a number of changes to its programme and teaching staff and intends to apply for accreditation again. There was no evidence to suggest that the assessment issues identified in the business diploma are systemic across the organisation.</p> <p>No significant compliance issues were evident in the international student focus area (refer Focus Area 2.5 summary).</p>
Conclusion:	<p>ATC has well-documented and effective processes for managing its most important compliance responsibilities. Compliance with external moderation requirements need strengthening.</p>

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 Foundation Skills (Level 1)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students achieve a range of outcomes with at least 60 per cent on average achieving the level 1 qualification⁴ and a smaller percentage also achieving NCEA level 1. Māori learner achievement is slightly lower which is an area ATC is actively working to improve. The trial classroom is a good example of ATC's flexibility and innovation to introduce improvements to improve outcomes for priority learners.</p> <p>As a result of participating in the programme, students grow their confidence as learners and gain basic skills and knowledge in literacy and numeracy, time management, communication and working in teams. Students also have the opportunity to gain their learner driver's licence. For some students, attending class every day is a significant achievement in itself.</p> <p>The programme is well designed with a range of indoor and outdoor activities to involve students in their learning, and to also make the programme relevant and engaging. Students are encouraged to set goals and these are reviewed throughout the programme. Staff across campuses are involved in moderating each other's work.</p> <p>A range of services are available to students to remove barriers to learning including drug and alcohol counsellors, a nurse, youth coaches and transport, in addition to daily pastoral care provided by the tutors.</p> <p>Tutors are provided with professional training opportunities to develop as educators. The ongoing analysis of data to inform self-assessment across the programme could be improved.</p> <p>Compliance responsibilities are generally well managed but</p>

⁴ Fifty-five per cent is a TEC performance benchmark for level 1 Youth Guarantee course completion. Source TEC website: [Monitoring and reporting](#)

	could be strengthened to ensure there is good oversight of programme delivery and health and safety for all staff and students across all campuses.
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2.2 Focus area: New Zealand Certificate in Business (Administration and Technology) (Level 3)

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Student achievement in this programme has seen variable results since 2017, with high non-completions due to withdrawals impacting on overall course completion results. ATC is aware of the issues and has increased its monitoring of student achievement and engagement in order to intervene earlier where students might be struggling. Where students do graduate with the qualification, ATC has good data on destinations and the valued gained by graduates and stakeholders which is used to inform self-assessment. Courses are reviewed each semester, informed by student feedback.</p> <p>Students feel well supported in their learning. Tutors give students good guidance around their learning and were described as approachable and supportive. A range of additional social supports are also available to students should they experience any barriers to their learning.</p> <p>The School of Business has gone through significant changes in terms of management and programmes which has led to some inconsistent application of normal processes and procedures, for example internal moderation, performance appraisal and staff development. With the recent appointment of a permanent head of school it is expected that these processes will be more consistently applied. There have been some improvements made already regarding internal moderation based on lessons learned from external moderation results, in particular NZQA withdrawing accreditation for the New Zealand Diploma in Business (Level 5).⁵</p> <p>Managing monthly intakes of students is an ongoing matter tutors expressed some concern about. The new head of school is aware of staff concerns and has set up regular communication with teaching staff to ensure their concerns are heard and attended to.</p>

⁵ Withdrawal of accreditation was effective 7 November 2018.

2.3 Focus area: New Zealand Diploma in Web Development and Design (Level 5)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students studying the New Zealand Diploma in Web Development and Design have achieved excellent results. Course completion rates have consistently averaged above 95 per cent since the programme was introduced in 2017. Students are achieving or exceeding their own academic and personal goals. Both internal and external moderation systems are robust, confirming that the positive achievement and outcomes are valid.</p> <p>Interviews with students and a small sample of external stakeholders indicate that the students are acquiring useful skills and knowledge which prepare them well for further study or employment, including a strong emphasis on the teaching of 'soft skills'. Students grow in confidence and develop a work ethic.</p> <p>ATC is using its industry and community connections and relationships effectively to develop and deliver a programme that closely meets individual and stakeholder needs.</p>

2.4 Focus area: Bachelor of Counselling (Level 7)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Achievement is good, with course completions averaging at least 80 per cent over the past three years. Students can also leave at the end of year one of the degree with an exit qualification if they decide not to pursue counselling. Graduates gain new skills and knowledge that they apply during placements. The qualification prepares them well for the realities of working as a counsellor and most graduates find either full-time or part-time employment as counsellors.</p> <p>The programme meets the needs of students and stakeholders with well-organised placement opportunities and rigorous panel assessment processes at the end of years 1 and 2 to ensure students have the skills, knowledge and aptitude to be</p>

	<p>competent counsellors.</p> <p>Graduate destination and valued outcome information is gathered systematically by tutors and programme management and used to inform programme improvements.</p> <p>Recommendations arising from internal and external moderation reports and degree monitor reports are monitored and actioned.</p> <p>Students are well supported in their studies, with personal counselling available and academic support and networking opportunities within the Christchurch counselling community (the only location where the programme is offered). Teaching staff – some of whom are still running their own private practices – bring a depth of experience to the programme. There is good communication between staff and oversight of the programme by management.</p>
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2.5 Focus area: International student support and wellbeing

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>International students at ATC are predominantly enrolled in one of two programmes – New Zealand Diploma in Web Development and Design (Level 5) or New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Skills (Level 2). In both programmes, course and qualification completion is 100 per cent for international students for the past two years. The goals for international students are well understood and the students are well supported by tutors, learning advisers and international student office staff to achieve their goals. Students interviewed described the range of pastoral care services and interventions, confirming how they have been supported.</p> <p>ATC leadership is proactive in managing areas for compliance, including Code of Practice obligations and immigration requirements. ATC has completed a detailed self-review of compliance with the Code of Practice using the NZQA template.</p> <p>ATC monitors visa approval rates and exceeds the minimum requirements set by Immigration New Zealand. ATC has recently identified, and acted on, a few areas for improvement in the management of its overseas agents. Although the areas identified don't have significant impact and are being managed well, systems for strengthening agent management will be important</p>

	<p>as ATC broadens its recruitment to other markets.</p> <p>A random sample of student files was selected and checked. All necessary documents were in the files in a well-organised and easily accessible format.</p>
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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 ATC:

- Continue to self-assess and improve outcomes for Māori learners.
- Continue to provide support and close monitoring to the new heads of school, in particular to ensure they are succeeding well in their new roles.

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 fraud⁶*
- *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.*

⁶ 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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