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# Report of External Evaluation and Review

## Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 11 January 2018

# Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction .....	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review .....	5
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results .....	7
Findings .....	9
Recommendations .....	16
Appendix .....	17

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*Final report*

# 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:	Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre (TLOEC)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	11 February 1993
Location:	111 Tuwharetoa Street, Taupo
Delivery sites:	As above
Courses currently delivered:	General English English and optional outdoors
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: nil, although there were a small number of students enrolled in English for Migrants (six) earlier in 2017.  International: 25 equivalent full-time students at the time of the EER.  Ages 13–40 plus – numbers vary from week to week; approximately half the students are under 18.  Ethnicities over the past year include: Japanese 21 per cent; French Polynesian 14 per cent; Thai 11 per cent; Tahitian 9 per cent; New Caledonian 8 per cent; French 5 per cent; Brazilian 4 per cent; Korean 4 per cent; Saudi Arabian 3 per cent; Swiss 2 per cent; Indian 2 per cent; Other 3 per cent ('Other' includes: Chilean, Czech, German,

Malaysian, Nicaraguan).

Number of staff:	Three full-time, six part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	General English English and optional outdoors
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>TLOEC is the only English language provider in the Taupo region. Core business is the provision of English tuition, study pathway assistance and homestay accommodation, as well as offering optional outdoor activities as a point of difference – more than 40 adventure activities are provided for students to enjoy.</p> <p>Students have diverse goals, ages and ethnicities. Students are attracted by the small-town atmosphere of Taupo, the English-language-only environment in the town, at the homestays and at the school, and the proximity to a variety of outdoor adventure activities. TLOEC has developed a reputation for attracting students from the same families, communities and countries. Approximately 35 per cent are returning students or 'word of mouth' enrolments.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>The PTE changed ownership in July 2017. Current staff continue to be employed by the new owner, and the previous owner is continuing to work at the school for 18 months to support the transition.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>At the previous external evaluation and review (EER) in 2014, NZQA was Highly Confident in the educational performance and Confident in the capability in self-assessment of TLOEC. NZQA made three recommendations: that TLOEC improve self-assessment practices, continue liaising with selected English New Zealand-affiliated language schools, and review current processes to ensure ongoing compliance with all standards prescribed by the industry body that the language school chooses to belong to.</p> <p>TLOEC is a member of English New Zealand. An English New Zealand audit was completed in August 2017 with three commendations and no recommendations or requirements.</p>

Other: TLOEC is also a member of Study Waikato and Study Taupo – local groups of international education providers.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas were chosen in consultation with the management team at TLOEC and represent current delivery in Taupo. The following focus areas were included in the EER:

### **International students: support and wellbeing**

This is a mandatory focus area – at the time of the EER all students were internationals.

### **General English**

The primary function of TLOEC is to provide English tuition to international students for varying lengths of study, at different levels, to meet a range of individual goals for each student.

## 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.*

Prior to the EER, the lead evaluator discussed the proposed site visit with the owner/director, the director of studies, and staff members to finalise the scope and agenda and respond to queries regarding the EER policy and process. A self-assessment summary was supplied in advance of this meeting, and further documentation was provided to the EER team to support the plan of inquiry.

The on-site visit was conducted over two days in Taupo by a team of two evaluators, one with specialist knowledge of English teaching. The evaluators interviewed the owner/director, director of studies, marketing director (previous owner), teaching staff, current and past students, student counsellors, homestay parents, and local primary and secondary schools. A range of documentation was reviewed and student files and other records were checked for compliance with regulations.

## *Disclaimer*

*The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>. 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>1</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>1</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.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre**.

TLOEC is achieving a high standard of educational performance relative to its role as a small regional organisation and its priority on providing a curriculum to meet the diverse needs of the international students. Key strengths are:

- Students develop and enhance their English language skills in a strongly supportive learning environment. These skills are immediately applicable in their daily lives and enable the students to contribute positively within their homestay and the local community.
- Comprehensive, relevant academic programmes are student-focused and have a clear emphasis on expected levels of achievement which align with English New Zealand standards.<sup>2</sup> The progress testing system with embedded self-review by students informs the regular teacher-student discussions and reviews of progress. Teachers value the collaborative sharing of teaching resources, the discussions at staff meetings and the professional development opportunities, and understand how these practices are improving their effectiveness.
- Students are actively engaged in their learning, are improving their English language skills and capabilities, and are gaining confidence and fluency in all aspects of communication. Small class sizes, placement in appropriate levels of learning, and the commitment of well-qualified staff contribute to individualised learning. Students valued the diversity of ethnicity and inclusiveness of the learning environment where students from all cultures, language abilities and backgrounds contribute to improved cultural understanding.
- The organisation is effectively managed, with a clear quality strategy to ensure that each student has a positive experience and goes on to recommend TLOEC to others. Strong relationships have been developed with the international education community in Taupo. TLOEC has taken a lead role with early childhood, primary and secondary providers to set up networks to develop innovative ways to support and pathway international students in the area. The new owner has put in place succession strategies to ensure a seamless transition over the next 18 months.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer conclusions and recommendations in Taupo Language English New Zealand Audit Report, 16 August 2017, pp22-23

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre**.

- Self-assessment is comprehensive and systematic. Increased attention to data collection and analysis to inform decision-making and identify progress and improvement is evident. This data is now providing good information on trends and is able to be evaluated against TLOEC benchmarks.
- An internal review calendar is used to systematically monitor progress and achievement against the NZQA key evaluation questions and the English New Zealand standards, resulting in regular updating of overview documentation and action plans.
- There is good evidence of a range of purposeful and systematic feedback mechanisms such as surveys, review meetings and feedback strategies being used to monitor academic progress and student support such as student counsellors, homestays and outdoor activities.
- Teaching staff receive feedback on their teaching from a number of sources including student satisfaction surveys, observations from peers and the director of studies, and annual performance reviews. Daily discussions covering operational matters and student concerns enable quick responses to put in place any additional support required.

TLOEC has effective self-assessment which is embedded within the practices of the organisation and is contributing to valued outcomes for the students and other stakeholders.

# Findings<sup>3</sup>

## 1.1 How well do students achieve?

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

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

The overall measure of achievement is to successfully meet individual student goals. There is good evidence of progress through comprehensive and regular testing, with individual reports and interviews identifying achievement of these personal goals. The internal benchmark, set at 95 per cent for full-time students to progress to the next level at the end of each 12-week block of learning, is being consistently met.

Progress reports are individualised, with both past and current test marks. Along with the student's self-review ('can-do' statements), these reports are the basis of reflection at regular tutorials with the teacher to discuss progress against achievement goals. Students develop confidence, independence and self-review capabilities through this review process.

A small number of students study English to improve their IELTS (International English Language Testing System) results. These students are achieving assessment results in the IELTS internal pre-test which are consistent with the external results achieved. This benchmarking is an indicator of quality outcomes.

The organisation has a clear understanding of student achievement through gathering a range of data and evidence which is being analysed, benchmarked and monitored to inform internal review processes and improvements.

## 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 **Excellent**.

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

Students value the positive and engaging learning environment provided by TLOEC. The inclusive, supportive and welcoming culture enables a diverse group of international students to improve their communication skills and participate in a range of activities in an English-only setting close to nature. The English-only

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<sup>3</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

policy at the school, within the homestay and within Taupo is one of the key benefits of studying at TLOEC. This is well recognised by the students.

TLOEC delivers valued outcomes to students and stakeholders through:

- Providing flexible learning pathways and opportunities for a range of international students who have individual goals and study timeframes. For example, students may be locally employed and need to improve their oral communication by undertaking a short English course.
- Preparing students to enter local high schools with the relevant level of English complemented by additional maths and English classes, providing a seamless transition. The recent approval from the Tertiary Education Commission, Ministry of Education, and NZQA enables students to achieve NCEA credits for the maths and/or science assessments at TLOEC through the mathZwise<sup>4</sup> initiative.
- The strong network of homestay families contributes to the student experience by involving students in the New Zealand way of life, providing a safe English-speaking home environment and supporting participation in a range of local activities. Students build strong relationships with their homestay families which last beyond their time in New Zealand.
- A range of initiatives to support local education providers, such as the 'parent and child' initiative with the local primary schools. This enables non-English speaking parents to study English at TLOEC while their children are at school to improve and support English spoken in the home to benefit the family.

Stakeholder feedback – including exit interviews – shows a high level of satisfaction with overall student care, academic achievement, wellbeing and contribution to the local area. TLOEC has a strong reputation for quality English language provision and this is confirmed by the recent English New Zealand audit outcomes.

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<sup>4</sup> mathZwise is a programme of study jointly provided by TLOEC and the secondary schools in the area, to improve maths and science outcomes for international students to ensure that they retain their skills through targeting the specialist English requirements of these subjects.

### 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 **Excellent**.

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

TLOEC is meeting the most important needs of the students and stakeholders. The organisation places a high priority on meeting student needs and being a really strong English language provider. There is a strong sense of collaboration, collegiality and sharing among staff to provide a flexible learning environment teaching English to a diverse group of international students, each with their own individual goals and reasons for study.

Curriculum delivery is well planned and regularly reviewed, with clearly articulated learning outcomes and expected standards of achievement. This is verified in the 2017 English New Zealand audit report. Regular teacher meetings discuss ways to improve teaching and assessment practice, currency of resources and feedback from students. The recent decision to change the course book was made by the teaching staff because of its links with the CEFR.<sup>5</sup> This provides a clear set of learning outcomes for each level for both students and teachers. There is evidence that this change has contributed to a positive upward trend in progress test results. Another improvement resulted from student survey feedback requesting more pre-teaching of examination and testing material to provide a more structured understanding of testing. An increase in formative testing provides this clarity and has contributed to a positive lift in achievement.

Well-qualified, highly committed staff provide a supportive and positive learning environment. Comprehensive progress testing, with self-review by students embedded in the feedback process, is a key feature of assessment at TOELC. Internal moderation is completed at staff meetings with external moderation carried out by two external providers to give the organisation assurance of the quality of their assessment practice.

Students record consistently high rates of satisfaction with their study and have good levels of achievement. These indicate the organisation's effectiveness in meeting student needs.

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<sup>5</sup> Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, [www.coe.int/lang-CEFR](http://www.coe.int/lang-CEFR)

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

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

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

Students have their English language level and individual goals assessed on entry to identify class placement and awareness of student aspirations for their time at the school. This entry process provides confidence that students are enrolled in the right class. An exit survey captures how well the students' goals and expectations have been met. The analysis shows that there is a high level of satisfaction against all indicators – consistently between 95 per cent and 99 per cent – and these are well above the ISB<sup>6</sup> benchmarks.

Students value the orientation process. It is well planned with clear guidelines and information in student handbooks. The integration of the student counsellors into the orientation is innovative and provides an opportunity for the support relationship to be developed on the first day. These counsellors provide 'first language' support which includes explanations of the school rules, homestay rules and the complaints process and guidance to open a bank account. Students are introduced to activities in the local community, followed by additional contact as required to meet the pastoral care support for each student. Strong student-staff relationships exist, with students indicating that their teacher is their first point of contact when support is required.

Flexibility and agility in meeting a range of diverse tuition needs is a strength of the organisation. A range of enquiries are received from international visitors wanting to explore English language study possibilities to meet different needs. TLOEC offers diagnostic testing to give potential students accurate information about their levels and options for study.

To enhance the student culture and involvement in the New Zealand lifestyle, students are involved in a range of optional activities at the school and in the community including volunteering at events, cultural festivals, outdoor activities, sporting events and Friday afternoon activities in the town. Overall, current and past students valued their educational experience at TLOEC and would recommend studying at the school to family and friends.

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<sup>6</sup> International Student Barometer

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

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

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

TLOEC has effective, supportive leadership and clear management roles and responsibilities to maintain operational oversight. These are strongly aligned to the mission 'to provide a safe learning environment where students from all cultures, language abilities and backgrounds are respected and encouraged'. Management has made effective decisions over the past four years to:

- use qualitative and quantitative data to improve the tracking of student progress, teacher performance, student needs analyses and better knowledge of stakeholder needs
- update databases to include CEFR descriptors in reports, to monitor agent performance, to review activities operators' safety effectiveness, and monitor homestay providers
- improve and extend the internal review process to include an annual summary
- improve the school's financial management through the employment of a new accounts manager and the installation of XERO (accounting software) to provide better information to manage expenses.

The effectiveness of teaching staff is reviewed through a well-understood performance model. Peer observations and discussion of student feedback and student achievement are key components of the enhanced annual performance review discussion with the director of studies. New staff are inducted, closely monitored and well supported to settle into their roles. Increasing opportunities for staff development are evident, with outcomes shared with other staff to inform improved practice. It is important to ensure that all staff have opportunities to build capability in their roles as these are adjusted to meet the changes in management structure.

The change in ownership is being managed with good lead-in times. Areas of management and compliance are being handed over in planned ways to support the changes. The previous owner will be retained to provide continued management of marketing, school relationships with other schools, agents and organisations, and orientation. This is a deliberate strategy of the new owner. Staff have all been retained, systems and processes continued, and some areas for improvement identified such as increasing the use of digital technology to support learning. TLOEC clearly understands its responsibility for the achievement and welfare of international students. Support strategies are effective in providing a caring, supportive, friendly and culturally inclusive environment.

## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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**.

TLOEC manages its compliance accountabilities and responsibilities effectively.

Systems and processes to maintain compliance with the Code of Practice<sup>7</sup> are in place. Self-reviews against the Code have been completed in 2016 and 2017 and are an ongoing part of the internal review process. There is a need to keep up to date with changes to ensure consistency and accuracy in documentation. The PTE needs to ensure it has systems to support the proposed increase in student numbers, especially those under 18 years of age.

The English New Zealand audit verifies that TLOEC complies with the organisation's requirements.

TLOEC undertakes a range of annual reviews including monitoring of agents, homestay providers and outdoor activity operators. Improvements are identified and actions taken to ensure compliance with relevant rules and legislation to ensure the safety of students and staff. These reviews are effectively managed by the previous owner and are an integral part of organisational practice. There is a need to ensure that these monitoring and review practices for compliance areas are continued and enhanced under the new roles and responsibilities.

The evaluation team checked international student files and homestay monitoring records for compliance with regulations. The files support the enrolment decisions made and meet immigration and NZQA requirements. With the planned recruitment of a new homestay co-ordinator, it will be necessary to provide training to maintain the current level of recording and monitoring.

With the change of ownership, the new owner is responsible for quality and compliance. It is important that current practices are maintained and improved to ensure that the organisation continues to be effective in this area.

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<sup>7</sup> Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016

## Focus Areas

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

### 2.1 Focus area: International Students: Support and Wellbeing

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

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

### 2.2 Focus area: General English

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

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

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Taupo Language and Outdoor Education Centre:

- Continue to ensure that the transition to new ownership maintains the quality of the outcomes for learners, and continues to improve and maintain the systems and processes leading to successful outcomes.
- Ensure that the importance of monitoring and review of the requirements of the Education (Pastoral care of international students) Code of Practice are fully understood and complied with by the new owners.

# 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](http://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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