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# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Southern Lakes English College

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 22 June 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:	Southern Lakes English College (SLEC)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	1993
Location:	57 Shotover Street, Wakatipu, Queenstown
Delivery sites:	One, as above
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General English</li><li>• General English Plus Examination Preparation</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: nil full-time students International: 200 full-time students – approximately 20 nationalities represented
Number of staff:	15 full-time and 11 part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	General English to level 2 General English Plus Examination Preparation (Level 4) No Consent to Assess against unit standards on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.
Distinctive characteristics:	SLEC offers English language courses to international students, and preparation for examinations such as Cambridge, TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System). SLEC is a full testing centre for

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Cambridge and TOEIC exams, and an offshore testing centre for a variety of other examinations and centres, as well as a CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) training centre for the University of Cambridge. CELTA is an internationally recognised qualification in English language testing. SLEC is a member of English New Zealand and Quality English.

Recent significant changes: SLEC introduced the teacher training course, Cambridge CELTA, in September 2016. Since the last external evaluation and review (EER), extra teaching space has been leased, additional teachers, marketing staff, student support and administration staff have been hired, and an evening timetable has been introduced.

Owing to a shortage of accommodation in Queenstown, SLEC has leased properties to accommodate some students.

A minority shareholding was sold to Southern Institute of Technology in 2014, and a board of directors was created comprising two representatives from Southern Institute of Technology and two from SLEC.

Previous quality assurance history: At the previous EER conducted in 2013, NZQA was Highly Confident in SLEC's educational performance and Highly Confident in SLEC's capability in self-assessment.

The English New Zealand audit in September 2015, and an early English New Zealand audit to precede and contribute to the 2017 NZQA EER, found SLEC met the standards at both audits.

Other: SLEC is a member of Quality English, which includes selected English language schools worldwide.

SLEC is a founding member of Study Queenstown, and is a member of the Queenstown Chamber of Commerce.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This EER included the following three focus areas. They were chosen following discussion and agreement with the organisation:

- International Students: Support and Wellbeing
- General English (including examination preparation)
- Cambridge CELTA

These focus areas allowed for a review of the whole organisation.

## 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.*

This evaluation involved a team of two, one of whom was an English language specialist.

The lead evaluator discussed the details of the EER with SLEC prior to the site visit, providing information and discussing recent changes to the key evaluation questions. SLEC provided several documents, including an extensive 'Integrated Self-Assessment Plan and Results Record', and supporting documents to enable the evaluation team to prepare for the visit.

The team spent two days on site at Queenstown, and interviewed the owner-directors, three members of the board of directors, the two directors of studies, 11 teachers, marketing, administration and support staff, 13 students and three CELTA graduates. A wide range of the organisation's documents and records was reviewed to confirm and validate the matters discussed with the personnel above.

The findings in this evaluation report were informed by the English New Zealand audits of 2015 and 2017. In accordance with NZQA's memorandum of understanding with English New Zealand, the areas investigated during the English New Zealand audits were not re-investigated at this evaluation. Examples include staff qualifications and experience, professional development, course design and delivery, student assessment, and premises and teaching and learning materials.

# Summary of Results

## Statements of confidence on educational performance and capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Southern Lakes English College**.

The key reasons leading to this level of confidence are:

- Close to 100 per cent of students achieve their goals, whether in English language development, achieving the desired IELTS scores, or graduating with the CELTA Cambridge qualification.
- Students gain significant value from studying at SLEC, including gaining the required English language levels for higher education, improving their English towards increasing their employment prospects in their home country, gaining employment in New Zealand, or improving their confidence in communicating in English while travelling or staying in New Zealand.
- SLEC has appointed appropriately qualified and experienced English language teachers, and provided well-resourced teaching facilities with access to appropriate technology and learning spaces. Teachers use an appropriate variety of learning activities and valid assessment processes.
- Students receive sufficient and appropriate information to support their study in Queenstown, including a detailed orientation on arrival and familiarisation with local facilities, and support to access accommodation.
- Since the previous evaluation (2013), governance and management has been strengthened with the creation of the new board which includes two members from the Southern Institute of Technology and two from SLEC.
- The board and management of SLEC have robust processes and practices which effectively monitor their most important compliance requirements. This includes a regular detailed self-review against the Education (Pastoral Care for International Students) Code of Practice.
- The organisation's Integrated Self-Assessment Plan and Results Record focuses on the NZQA EER key evaluation questions and supporting Tertiary Evaluation Indicators, and is an in-depth process of review and monitoring of ongoing improvements.
- The organisation's self-assessment practices are supported by a range of processes, for example regular student and staff surveys, student progress records, and board reports.
- SLEC benchmarks its performance using internal year-on-year data, and also accessing national and international data where this is available, as appropriate.

- Financial benchmarking is carried out with English New Zealand.
- SLEC's engagement with English New Zealand quality audit processes indicates a proactive organisation consistently meeting English New Zealand's quality standards. SLEC actively implements improvements in response to English New Zealand audit findings and suggestions. For example, the 2015 audit suggested; improving the feedback to teachers from student surveys, collecting informal student feedback, staff conducting a self-review prior to their performance appraisals, and improvements to evaluation forms.
- The board conducts an annual self-review using an internal peer review model between all members, and conducts six-monthly progress reports on the organisation's operations.

# Findings<sup>1</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**.

SLEC delivered its first four-week CELTA course to six students in 2016, with all passing successfully. Two graduates gained employment related to the qualification, and two were already in related employment. They both stated that the course had made a significant difference to their teaching. Another commented that it was 'the best course I have ever been on'. While student numbers were low, the 100 per cent success rate indicates that the programme was well planned and delivered, and students were well supported to succeed.

All General English students achieve their goals for improving their English language skills. Students stay for a range of times, with the average being 12 weeks. Students are tested weekly, and language development is reviewed and analysed by staff, resulting in students being moved to higher class levels as they improve sufficiently. This progress is by necessity individualised.

Student progress rates overall are analysed, and this data indicates ongoing improvement over the last four years, as well as reduced divergence between student cohort progress rates. While it is acknowledged that this data is at least to some extent dependent on individual student strengths in language acquisition, these are positive indicators.

SLEC data indicates that students studying towards IELTS exams show strong results, achieving their desired scores. For those studying towards Cambridge English First (FCE) and Cambridge English Advanced (CAE), average scores have lifted in the last two years. While this may indicate improvement in SLEC's performance, it is also influenced by other variables, so it is hard to draw definitive conclusions about the causes. Nevertheless, SLEC is drawing on a range of evidence to evaluate its own performance. The main indicator of excellent achievement here is students' very strong ratings of satisfaction with their own improvements in English language, that is, they complete what they enrol in.

These results show strong and consistent achievement levels and robust self-assessment. Results were validated through a variety of sources, such as SLEC's own data, student evaluations, interviews with students and teachers, self-assessment records, teacher meeting minutes and management reports to the board.

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

## 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**.

Most students enrol with clear goals to improve their confidence in and ability with the English language, and the vast majority achieve their goals. The value-add is in the improvements in their confidence and ability to use the English language for personal communications, travel and further study purposes. In the past four years, a number of students have progressed to study at Queenstown Resort College and Southern Institute of Technology, largely on hospitality and tourism programmes. (In total, 14,15, 26 and 33 students progressed to Queenstown Resort College and Southern Institute of Technology between 2013 and 2016.) Others use their gains in English language to work locally and travel in New Zealand. Those who return to their home country go on to further their existing careers and improve their job prospects.

The value for students was confirmed through the organisation's self-assessment documents, student evaluations and interviews with current students and graduates. Students interviewed at this evaluation recommend the school to their friends, and many said they had enrolled on recommendation from their friends. CELTA graduates noted that as ex-primary school teachers, this certification had 'fundamentally changed and improved their teaching strategies'.

To support the achievement of these outcomes, SLEC has introduced a range of strategies: study club, job club, and evening full-time classes to support students who are working in jobs with changing shifts. The joint ownership between SLEC and Southern Institute of Technology has successfully helped students progress to further study at the institute.

The organisation has robust processes which track and review the value of outcomes, including formal surveys and collecting informal anecdotes from students and graduates.

### 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**.

As noted, SLEC's two most recent English New Zealand audits found the organisation was meeting all English New Zealand standards. Many of these standards closely align with NZQA's EER key evaluation questions and the Tertiary Evaluation Indicators. The audits provided valuable input to this evaluation. For example, the audits confirmed that 'teachers and academic managers have appropriate qualifications and experience, the school complies with New Zealand legislation, the curriculum and programmes are purposeful and meet the needs of students, assessment processes are fair valid and appropriate, physical and learning resources are adequate and appropriate, student services and student welfare is appropriate, school has a thorough complaints procedure, school operates responsibly and ethically and engages in a systematic self-assessment'.<sup>2</sup> While the evaluation team did not re-investigate these areas, there was sufficient evidence presented in discussions with management, staff and students, and sufficiently well-documented processes and procedures in the organisation's records and documents to provide NZQA of assurance that these areas are sound.

SLEC actively implements improvements in response to English New Zealand audit findings and suggestions. For example, the 2015 audit suggested; improving the feedback to teachers from student surveys, collecting informal student feedback, staff conducting a self-review prior to their performance appraisals, and improvements to evaluation forms.

The NZQA-approved courses – General English and General English Plus Exam Preparation – are delivered as approved. Students interviewed at this evaluation noted that the initial placement test enabled them to start in an appropriate English language course level, and their subsequent movement to higher levels fitted their skill and knowledge development.

SLEC has created a new position of director of academic development, which is a valuable addition to staff, supporting good practice and facilitating ongoing staff development as well as managing the CELTA programme.

The organisation's Integrated Self-Assessment Plan and Results Record demonstrates robust programme review and renewal, with ongoing improvements such as developing a study club, job club and evening classes, and the addition of technology improvements: Wi-Fi for teachers and technology in the classroom such as TV monitors and laptops for YouTube clips.

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<sup>2</sup> These areas are directly connected to specific English New Zealand audit standards.

#### 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**.

As noted, SLEC's student services and student welfare practices meet English New Zealand standards. Further to this, there was good evidence that the organisation conducts regular and detailed self-review against the Education (Pastoral Care for International Students) Code of Practice. The organisation has a strong focus on the care and support of international students, ensuring their welfare is paramount and that they are supported in their study in New Zealand. This support goes beyond the minimum Code of Practice requirements. For example, SLEC leases houses in the Queenstown area to ensure students have access to accommodation for as long as they need it. This is commonly for the first few weeks of study until the students get settled, although some students choose to use this accommodation for their entire stay. Students' appreciation of this was noted in student interviews, along with the strong orientation provided on arrival. Improvements have been made to support students in leased accommodation with the introduction of 'house leaders'. Several phone numbers are provided for 24/7 phone contact, and access to first language speakers is available on campus or within the Queenstown community.

Students noted that staff were very accessible. There is a high level of rapport and respect between students and staff. Students are highly engaged in their learning, and commented on how the course structure and close attention to attendance had contributed to what they perceived to be fast improvement in their English language abilities.

#### 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**.

SLEC's 2014 sale of 49 per cent of its shares to Southern Institute of Technology and the subsequent creation of the board of directors has strengthened the overall governance and management, and helped maintain and extend SLEC's previous strong focus on educational achievement.

Interviews with three members of the board, the two directors of study, and a review of the organisation's documents – including board minutes and staff meeting minutes – show a clear focus on delivering quality education. While the organisation has grown since the previous evaluation – from 63 students to 200 – this growth has been modest, carefully managed, and not at the expense of quality.

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The board is actively involved in the oversight and monitoring of the quality of operational management. Recent board activities have included exploring strengthening the organisation's quality management system to align with Southern Institute of Technology, and the approval for leasing further space to accommodate the growth in student numbers. SLEC has also been able to draw on Southern Institute of Technology's human resources experience to develop their own processes.

The board conducts an annual self-review of its own performance using an internal mutual peer review process, and teacher evaluations included valued feedback on organisational management. Staff commented on improvements in resourcing since the Southern Institute of Technology share purchase as well as areas they felt could further improve, and management is aware of these. The board receives regular updates and reports on student numbers and student satisfaction and progress. SLEC's management is currently exploring the value of being involved with the Baldrige<sup>3</sup> Excellence Framework to further extend its focus on organisational quality.

## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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**.

SLEC has clear policies and procedures for monitoring its most important compliance accountabilities. It has maintained compliance against all English New Zealand standards in the last two audits, conducts regular in-depth self-review against the Code of Practice, and maintains a 'Compliance Calendar' with timetabled checks against all relevant areas, for example NZQA rules, the Education Act, health and safety legislation, employment law, changes on NZQA's website, and reviewing NZQA's eQuate newsletter for updates. The organisation also consults a law firm and an accountancy firm for specialist advice on these matters.

Processes for engaging and monitoring the performance of student recruitment agents are strong, with a clear and ongoing focus on confirming ethical behaviour. The organisation has a clear purpose and direction and is actively involved in renovating and responding to change.

No matters of concern came to the evaluators' attention, and given the close attention that SLEC receives from English New Zealand and other organisations, such as providing oversight of the CELTA course<sup>4</sup>, the evaluation team considers

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nist.gov/baldrige/publications/baldrige-excellence-framework>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/teaching-qualifications/celta/> (Cambridge Language Assessment is a part of the University of Cambridge)

that NZQA can continue to have high confidence in SLEC as a high-performing PTE.

# 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 (including preparation for examinations)

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

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

## 2.3 Focus area: Cambridge CELTA

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

There are no recommendations arising from this external evaluation and review.

# 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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