

ORGANISATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

This case study is part of a series of case studies looking at self-assessment of organisational activities in practice. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and Ako Aotearoa identified a number of tertiary education organisations (TEOs) across the country that have participated in external evaluation and review, and conducted interviews with senior staff, and considered relevant internal documentation and external reports. Each case study focused on a different way self-assessment is being used. These case studies offer examples of effective practice in a variety of settings, and illustrate self-assessment that has been done well and has led to good outcomes.

CASE STUDY

TŪRANGA ARARAU

Self-assessment and enhancing learning and teaching

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The following case study represents the views of Tūranga Ararau, and reflects the understanding that NZQA and Ako Aotearoa drew from the interviews. NZQA and Ako Aotearoa thank Tūranga Ararau staff for agreeing to take part in this work, and their openness during the interviews.

In considering the approach Tūranga Ararau takes to its self-assessment, NZQA and Ako Aotearoa identified the following key themes:

A strong and clear mission provides a strong basis for self-assessment as it allows an organisation to think clearly about what 'success' means and unites staff behind a shared set of values.

Senior leadership has an important role to drive self-assessment practice, but it should be managed in a way that ensures there is leadership, support and commitment throughout the whole organisation, which does not rely on a single champion for change.

Effective self-assessment is less about having specific tools than it is about how an organisation responds to and uses the most appropriate tools to support practice.

For staff, self-assessment can be a form of professional development. It supports staff to think about how their work relates to learning and teaching, and improve their practice.

SELF-ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE IN THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTOR

External evaluation and review is a periodic evaluation of TEO to provide a level of confidence (judgement) about the TEO's performance achieving outcomes relevant to identified stakeholders and its capability to use self-assessment to improve its performance. From September 2009 to September 2013, 604 PTEs participated in 670 external evaluation and reviews.

External evaluation and review uses a systematic process to make independent judgements about educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE is the extent to which the educational outcomes achieved by the PTE represent quality and value for learners and the wider community. An evaluation of educational performance involves answering questions focused primarily on the quality of learning and teaching, and the achievements of learners.

CAPABILITY IN SELF-ASSESSMENT is the extent to which the PTE systematically uses self-assessment information to understand performance and bring about improvement. It reflects the extent to which the organisation effectively manages its accountability and improvement responsibilities.

“MĀ TE KOTAHITANGA O NGĀ IWI ME TE MANA TANGATA KA TĀE TĀTOU KI TE TINO RANGATIRATANGA”

“Through unity of the tribes and leadership we will achieve total control over our destiny”

Tūranga Ararau is a private training establishment (PTE) based in Gisborne. It is owned by and is part of Te Rūnanga o Tūrangānui-a-Kiwa. The Rūnanga in turn supports and promotes the interests of three Iwi: Te Aitanga ā Māhaki, Rongowhakaata and Ngāi Tāmanuhiri.

Established in 1986, with funding through MACESS, Tūranga Ararau was registered as a PTE in 1991. Currently, it has about 200 students and receives funding from a variety of sources including the Tertiary Education Commission, Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Youth Development. Tūranga Ararau collaborates with community funding agencies and local schools to provide

school holiday programmes, and STAR and Gateway programmes. It partners with various industry training organisations to provide off-job training in forestry and shearing and with Te Wānanga o Raukawa and Waiaraki Institute of Technology to provide access to degree programmes in teaching and pathways to the National Diploma in Forestry (Operations Management).

In its most recent external evaluation and review report (2010), Tūranga Ararau received statements of *Highly Confident* in self-assessment capability and *Highly Confident* in educational performance.

Tūranga Ararau believes that its strength is in the fact that it is owned by and accountable to Iwi. This compels the organisation to create an understanding of Iwi needs and to meet those needs. As such, needs assessment and analysis are integral components of Tūranga Ararau's self-assessment.

Tūranga Ararau sees its purpose as empowering Iwi through responsive learning so that young members of the Iwi can gain high-level skills to manage and develop their cultural and economic resources, and can be fully employed in sustainable sectors of the labour market, including enterprises owned by the Iwi. Tūranga Ararau measures its own success by the outcomes of qualifications, employment and advanced learning – not just the bare achievement of these, but the quality of the outcomes. An aspect of this goal is ensuring that outcomes are aligned to Iwi and regional development.

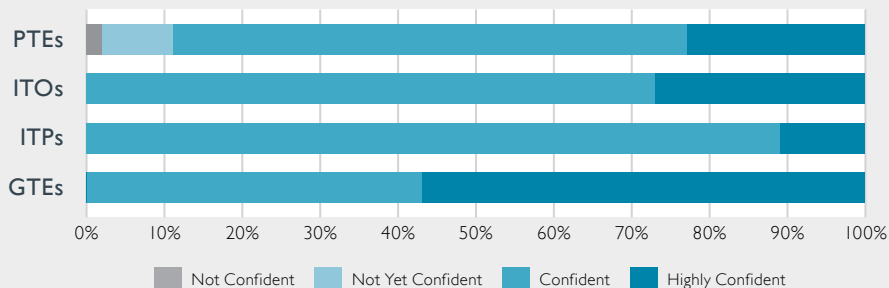
As Treaty of Waitangi settlements are completed and Iwi gain more control over assets, Tūranga Ararau is aware of the increased need for members of its Iwi to develop the skills and knowledge that will enable them to manage those assets. Hence, it has become imperative that the organisation understands its place in the community, matching the educational needs of its stakeholders and the contribution it must make to enable members of the Iwi to fulfil their potential. This approach specifically connects with key features of effective self-assessment, particularly being strategic and responsive to needs.

According to Tūranga Ararau, when self-assessment was first introduced by NZQA as a formal expectation for TEOs, it was seen as a challenge. The organisation soon came to the view, however, that self-assessment was less about doing new things than it was about building on and formalising existing practices.

The most common statement of confidence in self-assessment capability for PTEs is:

CONFIDENT

STATEMENTS OF CONFIDENCE IN SELF-ASSESSMENT CAPABILITY ACROSS ALL TEOs†



† One wānanga has participated in external evaluation and review, resulting in *Confident* in self-assessment capability.

ORGANISATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT Implementing effective practices

Other case studies include:
Self assessment and...

Creating fit-for-purpose learning
BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION ITO

Improving organisational capability
OTAGO POLYTECHNIC

Developing sustainable programmes
PEOPLE POTENTIAL

Pursuing effective change
EASTERN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

“EMPOWERING THROUGH RESPONSIVE LEARNING”

APPROACHING SELF-ASSESSMENT

KEY POINTS

For Tūranga Ararau, needs assessment forms an integral part of its self-assessment enabling it to identify, understand and respond to learner & iwi needs.

Staff and management are fully informed about how programmes are progressing.

Tūranga Ararau builds and maintains close links with its community.

Tūranga Ararau is accountable to the Chief Executive of Te Rūnanga o Tūrangānui-a-Kiwa. As such, it has to report on a regular basis on its performance to the Rūnanga, and it is important that the organisation explains its performance on the basis of valid evidence.

The organisation also approaches organisational performance on the basis that it is a summation of all programmes delivered within the organisation. To do this effectively, Tūranga Ararau's self-assessment needed to involve fully understanding how each programme was performing, and the strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats that each programme faced. The organisation concluded that it needed a more systematic process for reviewing how well programmes performed.

Tūranga Ararau developed a tool that formed the basis of the process: the Programme Development Evaluation and Planning form. Staff and management use the form for gathering evidence for understanding what is occurring in programmes. At programme level, tutors use this form to reflect on the various elements of their programmes.

The form uses an 'evaluative checklist' format, where the questions act as prompts for reflective thinking and are phrased in a reflective manner, such as: "Am I ..." or "My programme is meeting iwi and community needs by ...". An evaluative checklist guides evaluation rather than establishing a required set of steps. The form is still under development, and is being developed with staff in mind to ensure that self-reflection occurs. Tutors engage with the form on a monthly basis. Tutors use information from existing documents, student feedback, and general education performance statistics such as qualification and course completions and retention data to complete the form. These forms are used by the manager to keep the Rūnanga Chief Executive informed of Tūranga Ararau's performance.

The monthly forms are supplemented by quarterly reviews, where the information in the forms is analysed and discussed by the manager and the relevant programme leaders. Tutors use the outcomes from these meetings to modify and develop their classroom practice as well as plan their professional development. Tutors also present their reflections on their programmes at staff meetings. This allows tutors to explain how they are achieving their individual goals, and to raise any problems they are facing. Tūranga Ararau noted that this enables sharing of good practice and, quite often, tutors find that they can call upon their colleagues for the skills and knowledge they may lack.

All these processes have led to Tūranga Ararau being able to submit evidence of its performance to the Rūnanga and its trustees through a variety of methods. These include statistical data such as qualification and course completions, learner evaluation and feedback, informal engagement with iwi members, demand for and occupancy of courses, maintenance of contracts, contractors/employers seeking graduates and graduate and employer feedback. This gives Tūranga Ararau a way to not only identify and match stakeholders' needs, but also to explain to its main stakeholder how well the community's needs are being met, improvements that are being made, and areas where improvement are still required. This has the potential to lead to a stronger relationship between the organisation and its board of governors, and allows the board to understand what is happening within the organisation and how learner achievement is being affected by current practice. Thus, the board can make better, more informed decisions.

“MY PROGRAMME IS MEETING IWI AND COMMUNITY NEEDS BY ...”



IT'S AN
OPPORTUNITY
 [FOR STAFF] TO THINK ABOUT
 WHAT THEY'RE DOING,
 BOTH **SHORT-TERM**
 AND
LONG-TERM"

BENEFITS OF USING SELF-ASSESSMENT

KEY POINTS

Increased input from staff about programme management

Self-assessment allows tutors to review their programmes and creates opportunities for improvement

It also allows the organisation to respond quickly to internal and external changes

More meaningful and purposeful interaction with external stakeholders

Improvement in assessment and moderation.

Tūranga Ararau reports a number of benefits from using self-assessment. The organisation is most focused, however, on learner achievement, and everything the organisation does is directed towards the benefit of its learners.

Tūranga Ararau reports that staff provide more input than previously about programme management and strategic and operational planning. Staff have a much deeper understanding of what is happening in a particular programme and how this affects the organisation as a whole. Staff are also more confident about expressing an opinion and challenging established thinking. The staff meetings have helped staff develop their confidence to speak out about their programmes in front of colleagues, describing successes, failures and future plans backed up by solid evidence.

The greater depth in analysis of programmes has also enabled tutors to identify areas for improvement. The statistical data, external and internal feedback and other information gathered allows tutors to carry out their own analysis of how programmes are progressing, to see what is working and what is not, and decide on what they can do differently. This is further supported by the regular meetings held with the manager, which allow the tutors to gain an impartial view of the evidence. Tutors have found that their own ability to analyse data and see strengths and weaknesses in their programmes has increased because of the use of self-assessment.

This deeper and more insightful understanding of programmes and the factors affecting them, as well as knowing the strengths and weaknesses of individual programmes, has allowed the organisation to respond rapidly to changes in the environment. New programmes can be introduced or existing programmes modified or even cancelled in response to community and other external and internal stakeholders' needs.

One of the more notable benefits that Tūranga Ararau has experienced from its self-assessment

practice has been more meaningful and purposeful interactions with its external stakeholders, particularly Iwi. Tūranga Ararau is a constituent of Te Rūnanga o Tūrangānui a Kiwa, which represents three Iwi, whose needs and aspirations are not always easily satisfied. Sometimes, convincing the trustees of each Iwi of the value of Tūranga Ararau has been difficult. However, with the successful implementation of self-assessment and evidence-based judgements, the Iwi trustees and Rūnanga management are more aware of what is happening in Tūranga Ararau, the successes it is achieving and the challenges it faces. The manager reports that trustees and kaumatua of the Rūnanga provide more support than previously.

The manager also reports that there is now increased interaction with the community. People see the all-round development of Tūranga Ararau's learners and thus see value in the organisation, resulting in increased requests from the community for new programmes. There is also greater co-operation with schools and other educational organisations to find the best course of learning for youth in the community.

Another area where Tūranga Ararau believes self-assessment has greatly helped teaching practice has been in moderation. At one stage, there was limited knowledge of and experience in assessment and moderation among tutorial staff. Tūranga Ararau realised that this was a weakness and so extended the role of an existing employee to manage the assessment and moderation processes, and also employed an additional person who was well versed in this area. This person's role was to train staff in assessment and in developing systems for moderation. This resulted in a flowchart to show moderation requirements, and a process of formalised reporting so that the moderation was well tracked, leading to improved assessments, and this has benefited learners. Assessments are now better designed and suited to gauge how well students have learnt and what gaps still exist in their learning.



SELF-ASSESSMENT NEEDS TO BE
PART-AND-PARCEL
 RATHER THAN A
 SEPARATE COMPONENT...
 WHAT WE'RE TRYING
 TO DO IS MAKE THE
EASIEST PATHWAY
 FOR [STAFF]"

CHALLENGES FACED

KEY POINTS

Challenges include persuading all members of staff to be part of self-assessment practice.

A further challenge was keeping staff continuously engaged in self-assessment, and ensuring the tools for self-assessment were easy to use.

One of the greatest challenges anticipated by Tūranga Ararau when developing a culture of self-assessment was getting staff to adopt it and make it part of their work. The organisation believed that it was important that all staff were on board with the process. This took some time, but it helped that tutors were willing to consider the new approach and were involved in its development and could identify some current practice with the new requirements. Incorporating self-assessment into the job description also made it a part of tutors' regular work. Tūranga Ararau also avoided using terms such as 'self-assessment' or 'self-review' to avoid any sense of compliance requirements. Rather, Tūranga Ararau encouraged staff to think about the process as reflection. This strategy reduced the focus on 'job performance' and enabled staff to consider more freely how they were doing, how their actions affected the organisation and the learners, and how they could do things better.

When Tūranga Ararau initially introduced the Programme Development Evaluation and Planning form, management was concerned that tutors could view it negatively, as extra work. The organisation dealt with this issue by working with tutors to develop the content. When the tutors saw the final product their concerns were allayed as it related strongly to existing practice. This contributed to greater formality and consistency in reflecting on their practice and reporting to management. Previously, this information would often be kept within the programme.

Alongside the challenge of encouraging staff to initially embrace self-assessment was the challenge of keeping them continuously engaged in the process. There is a tendency for tools used to guide self-assessment (such as the Programme Development Evaluation and Planning form) to become unconnected, periodic events that are done mechanically and without much reflective thought. To overcome this block, staff at Tūranga Ararau were encouraged to come up with new

ideas, however 'out-of-the-box' they may have appeared. The manager also adopted an 'open door' policy whereby staff and students could interrupt her at any time to discuss issues, ask for help or just have a chat. Tūranga Ararau has also fostered a culture of pride among staff in what they do and the difference they make to their learners' lives. This drives staff to continuously seek improvement, and this process is reinforced when they see the value of self-assessment (or reflection as they prefer to think of it) in achieving continuous improvement.

At the time of designing and implementing the self-assessment process, Tūranga Ararau had identified the need to design new tools for gathering and reporting information. One of the lessons it learned was to keep these tools as simple and user-friendly as possible. It was apparent to management that if tools were complicated to use, staff would be less likely to use them. To achieve user-friendliness, management kept staff fully involved in and informed of the development of these tools. Thus, the tools were designed and tested by the users before being fully implemented.

OPPORTUNITIES AND FACTORS FOR SUCCESS



[SELF-ASSESSMENT IS THINKING]
HOW HAVE THINGS
GONE TODAY AND
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO TO
MAKE IT BETTER
TOMORROW?"

KEY POINTS

Staff at Tūranga Ararau unfailingly credit the success of their self-assessment to the leadership of the manager and the support of senior staff

The relationship between Iwi and the organisation is also a key factor in the success of self-assessment

The culture of the organisation focuses on its learners and is built around a strong value system incorporating factors such as truthfulness, honesty, pragmatism, and most of all, the value of people.

One of the strongest factors behind Tūranga Ararau's positive experience of self-assessment has been leadership. The manager of Tūranga Ararau has led the organisation since its inception, and has a very strong and clear understanding of how the organisation operates, its strengths and weaknesses and its relationships with external stakeholders. The manager connects the organisation to its community through contacts & recognition in the community. The manager has also been able to get staff to 'buy-in' to the value and importance of making self-assessment a part of an individual's job. She has done this by involving all staff in the planning, implementation and review of all that is done in the organisation. In many ways, the manager is perceived as being *the* organisation, and the *mana* she has with the staff and community contributes hugely to the success of the organisation.

This reliance on an individual does, however, create a potential risk for the sustainability of high-quality self-assessment at Tūranga Ararau. The manager and the organisation have recognised this risk and are responding by identifying and preparing a successor. One of the steps being taken – which is an outcome of the self-assessment and programme evaluation process – is to develop leadership capability and skills in all staff, so that they can take responsibility and become accountable for their own areas.

Another factor that Tūranga Ararau believes has contributed to its success is its understanding of the needs of its community. Tūranga Ararau has a strong relationship with its Iwi which has been built up over the years through mutual trust and respect.

The contribution that Tūranga Ararau has made in enabling youth to realise their hopes and aspirations has gained the organisation a place of considerable importance in the community. This allows the organisation to better match the needs of its stakeholders especially learners. Honesty and truthfulness are key values that

Tūranga Ararau impresses upon its staff. This means being open about weaknesses and shortcomings. These need to be identified so they can be resolved. The leadership also ensures that whatever is proposed is realistic and viable. Challenging but achievable goals and objectives are set and staff are fully supported in reaching their goals.

Most importantly, Tūranga Ararau values people above all else. The organisation sees its main purpose as helping people who need education. Hence, people's needs are given priority. The manager always makes time to talk to students, staff and other stakeholders. Staff go out of their way to help and support students. External stakeholders are always welcome and ideas, suggestions and feedback are seriously considered. As a result, there is a unity of purpose in the organisation's activities. Tūranga Ararau is confident that this approach will enable the organisation to control its own destiny.



Self-assessment

Self-assessment is a key component of NZQA's evaluative quality assurance framework. Evaluative self-assessment requires a TEO to evaluate itself, by focusing on how well it is identifying, responding to and meeting learner and stakeholder needs, and taking appropriate action in light of the understanding gained.



Self-assessment across an organisation focuses on: the outcomes sought, and evidence of learner and organisational achievement of these outcomes; the key processes influencing achievement of these outcomes, including processes for continuous improvement of quality and identifying stakeholder needs, and compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

The specific processes for self-assessment are not prescribed. To ensure that the framework works in a consistent and comparable way, however, TEOs are required to apply the following high-level requirements for self-assessment:

- Implement self-assessment using the key features of effective self-assessment.
- Answer the key evaluation questions to provide a common basis for both the self-assessment and external evaluation and review processes.
- Use relevant minimum quantitative and qualitative data on such matters as learner enrolments, retentions and completions.

KEY FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assessment includes the ongoing processes a TEO uses to gain evidence of its own effectiveness in providing quality education. Processes used for self-assessment should be comprehensive, authentic, transparent, robust, and focused on the following areas:

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

*To what extent is the TEO systematically determining and addressing the needs of relevant learners, employers and the wider community?**



PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

To what extent are processes and practices supporting successful learning and helping achieve outcomes?



LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

To what extent is educational provision having an impact on learner progress and the achievement of intended learning outcomes?



OUTCOMES

*What outcomes are learners achieving, including educational achievement and longer term economic, social, and cultural benefits? What is the value of those achievements for the relevant learners, employers and the wider community?**



USING WHAT IS LEARNED

To what extent have evidence-based conclusions and decision-making been incorporated into strategic and business planning to drive improvements?



ACTUAL IMPROVEMENTS

What has improved? To what extent have those improvements been relevant and worthwhile? How do you know that the changes you made have had the effect you intended? Has the change had an impact on the problem identified?



*Including, where EER involves mātauranga Māori evaluative quality assurance (MMEQA) criteria, whānau, hapū, iwi, hāpori Māori and mātauranga Māori as a body of knowledge.

KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The key evaluation questions explore important dimensions of educational quality: outcomes, programme content and design, and delivery. These questions provide a common basis on which TEOs are reviewed by NZQA. The six, high-level, open-ended questions focus either on the outcomes achieved or the key processes that contribute to those outcomes.

How well do learners achieve?

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

How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

How effective is the teaching?

How well are learners guided and supported?

How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?