

Tā Te Pūkenga tauākī e pā ana ki te whakahaere haumarū o ngā mahi mātātoa | Te Pūkenga position statement on the safe management of adventure activities

Approved by Te Pūkenga Council on 11 December 2024

Te tāhuhu kōrero | Background

1. Adventure activities are, by their nature, prone to dynamic risks and often will involve a group of people in close proximity. When things do not go to plan, the outcomes can be catastrophic. It is for this reason, among others, that a position statement was developed to clarify Te Pūkenga expectations.
2. Te Pūkenga comprises 25 business divisions. Some of these business divisions provide, facilitate and/or contract adventure activities in diverse environments for ākonga, kaimahi and others.
3. There are two, broad ways in which these adventure activities are provided, facilitated and/or contracted.
4. First, adventure activities are delivered as integral components of an outdoor education, adventure tourism, sport and recreation, or sustainability programme. In this context, the outcome is generally to transform ākonga into confident leaders of adventure activities, for instance, as future guides, instructors and educators.
5. These programmes are provided at our campuses, including Ara, EIT, MIT, NMIT, Otago, Tai Poutini and Wintec. They range from Level 4 to 7 on the NZQA framework.
6. Activities vary from campus to campus, programme to programme according to geography, tutor strengths, equipment availability and course objectives. For example, the Tai Poutini programme is geared towards rivers and bush on the West Coast, while Otago uses its Wanaka location for alpine and mountain biking adventures.
7. The second way includes the ad hoc adventure activities undertaken by our kaimahi and ākonga that are unrelated to an on-campus adventure programme. These activities will involve external contractors or operators and will be provided through some form of booking arrangement. An example is a workgroup organising a sea kayak trip on the local harbour to strengthen whanaungatanga; another is a leadership team contracting a provider to run some team building challenges.
8. In the above situations, the person booking the activities has little influence or control over the conduct of the adventure activities, but does have responsibility for the booking decision. That decision may need some understanding of legislation and good practice.

Pūtake | Purpose

9. To provide expectations on the management of adventure activities conducted by or for Te Pūkenga kaimahi and ākonga.

Ngā kawatau | Expectations

10. We expect that adventure activities under the influence and control of Te Pūkenga will, so far as reasonably practicable:
- Conform or align with the requirements outlined in the NZ Safety Audit Standard.¹
 - Comply with the Health and Safety at Work (Adventure Activities) Regulations 2016.
 - Conform to good practice.
 - Be internally and/or externally reviewed.
 - Operate within the purpose and context of the values and objectives of the course, programme, business division, community/group/team, and so on.

Pitopito kōrero | Notes

Definitions

11. *Adventure activity*

‘Adventure activity for educational or recreational purposes that involves a degree of instruction or leadership and a deliberate, accepted element of risk.’

This definition is from the ISO standard² with one modification, that is, swapping ‘tourism purposes’ to ‘educational or recreational purposes’. The change reflects our context and is flexible enough to cover the variety of adventure activities we undertake.

The definition in the Adventure Activity Regulations³ is useful, but largely relates to commercial operators.

12. *Adventure activity operator*

This term is used in the Adventure Activity Regulations to describe a commercial operator or provider of an adventure activity as defined in the regulations.

13. *Ākonga*

Learner, student, apprentice, trainee or similar enrolled or registered on Te Pūkenga course or programme of study or training.

14. *Kaimahi*

Kaimahi include employees, contractors, people on work experience and trainees.

Regulations

15. Aotearoa New Zealand is the only country to have a comprehensive set of regulations governing certain adventure activities. The regulations cover a wide swathe of commercial operations. A key requirement in the regulations is for adventure activity operators to successfully pass an external audit with an accredited auditor.
16. The regulations define which adventure activities are in and out of scope. Tertiary institutions are **not in scope** of the regulations. Therefore, adventure activity programmes run by polytechnics do not need to pass a safety audit for the purposes of meeting the regulations.

¹ [Safety management system requirements for adventure activity operators, version 2.0, August 2023](#)

² ISO, ‘ISO 21101:2014 Adventure tourism – Safety management systems – Requirements’

³ NZ Govt, ‘Health and Safety at Work (Adventure Activities) Regulations 2016’

17. Despite this exemption, the regulations, the standard(s) referenced in the regulations, and the associated material from WorkSafe and other authorities are rich, accessible sources of information. For instance, a recent review of the regulations resulted in some key changes that should be considered when conducting activities or contracting a provider. The changes included:
 - a. A specific requirement to consider natural hazards in planning.
 - b. Having a policy in place to determine when to call an activity off.
 - c. New requirements of technical advisors, particularly regarding natural hazards.
18. Adventure activity operators are listed on the [Adventure activity operators register](#). When contracting an external provider, first determine whether the operator would need to be registered and then check the register.
19. It is advisable to regularly monitor the regulations for any changes to definitions of adventure activity and to auditing requirements.

Standards

20. There are two, main standards that outline requirements for a safety management system for adventure activities: NZ Safety Audit Standard and ISO 21101. Either can be used as guidance or validation for the types of programmes run at our polytechnics.
21. Both standards lean more towards the commercial sphere than the non-profit or educational world. The NZ Safety Audit Standard was written for the NZ regulations. ISO 21101 was developed for the global adventure tourism sector.
22. ISO 21101 is accompanied by a practical guide that helps organisations understand how to develop and implement the requirements of the standard.
23. Good practice is stated in current, accepted sources, including (among other things) Activity Safety Guidelines,⁴ maritime rules, adventure aviation rules, national and international qualification syllabi or assessment guides, and manufacturer's recommendations. References to these sources would be expected in documents that support delivery of adventure activities.

Reviews

24. Reviews can take many forms and can be termed as assessments, audits, checks, inspections, and so on. For simplicity, we have used the term 'review'. While there is a place for document-only reviews, we encourage the use of technical experts to conduct field reviews of actual practice.
25. In addition to the usual programme reviews, performance assessments and technical evaluations, polytechnics can engage their Wellbeing and Safety function to carry out or facilitate an internal review of the whole safety management system or parts of it.
26. Polytechnics wanting an external, independent review of their programmes can choose from a range of auditors. Currently, AdventureMark and Qualworx are the main players.
27. Polytechnics running programmes on public conservation land will require an independently audited safety plan to gain a DOC concession. The plan must be audited by a JASANZ-accredited organisation.

⁴ See <https://www.supportadventure.co.nz/overview/>