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# Targeted Evaluation Report

Eastern Institute of Technology  
Limited | Te Aho a Māui

Date of report: 7 October 2021

# Targeted evaluation of Eastern Institute of Technology Limited (EIT)

*NZQA carries out targeted evaluations of Te Pūkenga subsidiaries whose external evaluation and reviews (EER) became due during the transition to the new organisation.*

*The targeted evaluations focus on areas of educational performance that will be important for both the subsidiary and Te Pūkenga in the new operating environment.*

*The limited scope of the targeted evaluation means that it will not result in organisational statements of confidence. Therefore, no EER category status will be assigned.*

# About EIT

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*EIT is a regional provider of vocational and professional education and training. EIT has two campuses in Hawke's Bay and Tairāwhiti and six regional learning centres, and delivers to remote communities using local facilities. Sixty per cent of EIT's international students are based at a central Auckland campus. EIT has around 160 programmes and training schemes, with over half at degree and postgraduate levels.*

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Region:	Hawke's Bay and Tairāwhiti regions
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: In 2019, 10,817 students – 4957 equivalent full-time students (EFTS) including 4192 Māori students (2202 EFTS) and 471 Pasifika students (216 EFTS)  International: In 2019, 1462 students (783 EFTS)  In 2019, 46 per cent of students were under 25 years of age
]Number of staff:	597 full-time equivalent staff (including 354 tutorial and 243 allied and management staff)
TEO profile:	<a href="#"><u>Eastern Institute of Technology Ltd</u></a>
Scope of evaluation:	This targeted evaluation considered three focus areas:  1. Learner support – how effectively EIT supports and guides learners  2. Learning assessment design and practice – how effectively EIT assesses learning  3. EIT nominated the following areas of expertise and strength for evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Degree and postgraduate programmes, and research</li><li>• Connections with the region</li></ul>
MoE number:	6007

NZQA reference: C44464

Dates of targeted evaluation: 27 October–2 November 2020

# Summary of results

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*Performance is strong in all focus areas. EIT's effectiveness as a regional provider of education and training and, increasingly, research, is underpinned by longstanding connectedness and collaboration with the wider community. EIT's policy framework for assessment and student support is comprehensive and effectively operationalised. Regular reporting and review processes provide assurance of overall standards and consistency and inform ongoing improvements.*

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- The effectiveness of EIT's relational and holistic approach to student support is reflected in overall strong pass rates and high rates of student satisfaction. Specialist support staff and tutors are responsive to the needs of EIT's diverse and distributed students. Data on student referrals and service provision is regularly gathered and shared. However, a greater focus on understanding the impact of support provision on wellbeing and success could provide stronger evidence for planning and resource allocation.
- EIT has appropriate academic frameworks, policies and procedures, and systems for monitoring and review which underpin key aspects of teaching and learning, including assessment. Generally, assessment and moderation practices are sound, and systems for maintaining standards are effective in most cases. In several cases, improved compliance with moderation policies is required. Improvement projects are underway to address known shortcomings.
- EIT has a strategic and community-based approach to research, which is accompanied by sustained investment and engagement. Research activity and outputs have increased over recent years and EIT is performing well for its size across a range of measures. EIT's strength in research is related to the successful establishment of a large degree and postgraduate programme portfolio. This has been achieved through a systematic and coordinated approach to development, delivery and academic oversight.
- EIT's effectiveness in connecting with and serving its region is well evidenced and integral to the institute's educational and organisational performance. EIT's commitment to this strategic priority is reflected in longstanding and extensive relationships with key stakeholders, and a practical and ongoing focus on applying resources and skills to supporting the aspirations of the wider community.

# Focus areas

## Focus area 1: How effectively are learners supported?

### Findings and supporting evidence

EIT aims to provide equitable access and student support across multiple delivery sites and a diverse student population. EIT reports that 76 per cent of students are 'priority learners'.<sup>1</sup> This has implications for the range and nature of support required, in particular to ensure that support needs are identified early and that services are culturally appropriate and suitable for students at all levels of study. Evidence from a variety of sources (including achievement data) confirms EIT's overall effectiveness in responding to this commitment, and high levels of student satisfaction with the availability and quality of support.

#### *Meeting needs*

EIT's relational and holistic approach to student support and wellbeing is a strength, and working well for Māori in particular. Most students approach tutors and programme coordinators in the first instance, or become aware of the many student services from class visits and then access specialist staff support and resource, as required. A broad range of academic, cultural and pastoral support services are offered to students in main campuses and, to a lesser extent, at regional learning centres, in a variety of ways (in person – individually or in group settings – and online). Appropriate information on service provision and links to resources are available online and in print. The staffing profile reflects the cultural diversity of the student population (some of whom are EIT graduates), and targeted support is available for Māori, Pasifika and international students. Disability and wellbeing support has been expanded in recent years in response to a review of service provision, and improvements to mental health support have also been implemented.

EIT receives funding to provide targeted support for students within the Trades Academy, Youth Guarantee and Māori and Pasifika Trades Training schemes. These funds ensure dedicated pastoral care support is available to actively monitor participation and progress. Distance or online students access the usual services online, or by visiting a campus. Students on work placements receive additional support from tutors who are able to monitor student engagement and progress online, and/or by regularly visiting worksites. Work is underway to develop a 'best practice' approach to work-integrated learning, which will inform future support initiatives.

Support services for international students are comprehensive. This review found no significant concerns raised under the International Code of Practice. A

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<sup>1</sup> Māori, Pasifika and under 25 years of age

systematic induction process to life and education in New Zealand was augmented in 2017 with a formal compulsory course, Academic Inquiry, that develops study skills and critical thinking. A formal evaluation of this course confirmed its value and effectiveness in improving engagement and academic outcomes.

### *Student facilities*

EIT recognises the importance of student facilities especially for students who have limited access to study space and technology beyond the campuses. Spaces, such as the Whānau Room in the school of business, provide an environment for collaborative study and establishing social and academic networks. and EIT continues to invest in and upgrade spaces at multiple campuses as funds permit. Most recently, investments have been made in collaborative learning spaces at Te Ūranga Waka and completing the interior of Te Ara o Tāwhaki, EIT's marae on the Hawke's Bay campus.

The EIT students' association has a constructive relationship with EIT management and staff. Complementary support services are provided under contract to EIT. The association also has an advocacy role and representation on key academic committees which enables formal input into policy development and service provision.

### *Connection during lockdown*

During the COVID-19 lockdown, teaching and support staff adopted a variety of practical approaches to staying connected to students and supporting their learning. Additional reference material, study guides and learning resources were made available online. Workshops were developed in digital resources. Financial and pastoral support mechanisms were established to support students to remain engaged with their learning. Students interviewed during the targeted evaluation appreciated staff availability and responsiveness. Initial analysis shows a marked increase in student engagement with EIT online and strong levels of satisfaction with managing online/distance learning and EIT's communication during the lockdown. Staff are enthusiastic about the opportunity for further developing online resources and increasing technology-mediated solutions to provide support.

### *Self-assessment*

EIT uses organisational data to understand learner characteristics, and monitors engagement and withdrawal data, as well as course completion rates as measures of success for learner support. Māori student achievement is comparable overall with other learners, although, for 2019, a parity gap was noted at levels 3 and 4. Staff described their approaches to identifying learning needs at lower levels of study, including interviews, literacy and numeracy assessments, and attendance monitoring. However, a coordinated response is not evident.

### *Final*

EIT seeks to understand the student experience using a set of generic surveys administered throughout the year. Collation and analysis of the data provides EIT with an overview of student perspectives and trends. Schools are increasingly adopting other approaches for gathering feedback, such as targeted focus groups, which can yield richer and more specific information for improvement purposes.

There is widespread use of a database for recording student pastoral and learning issues, and referrals to central services. School management monitors open cases and identifies areas of concern. The data is supporting day-to-day service provision and is not being systematically reviewed to evaluate service impact or opportunities for improvement across the wider organisation. Learning services prepare annual reports, including service developments and activity statistics, which are shared with schools as part of the annual programme review process and summarised for senior management. This evidence is being used proactively to inform service provision in the following year and in collaboration with schools, to customise and target activities. Overall, however, the self-assessment approach within the central services team could be strengthened by moving beyond activity data to understanding the impact and effectiveness of support interventions.

### *Policies*

Learner support policies are under review as part of the standard policy review cycle. EIT is currently reviewing conformity with the interim domestic Code of Practice and developing an action plan. Recognising that all staff share responsibility for student success and wellbeing, EIT offers training to build capability in identifying needs and providing support, such as a disability and wellbeing workshop. Herea Te Rā is a comprehensive framework to build capability and support staff to raise Māori student achievement. Management monitor the uptake of this training and a strong commitment to it was expressed in interviews. Annual staff conferences provide opportunities for staff to share and reflect on effective approaches for supporting EIT's learners.<sup>2</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Students at EIT have access to academic, cultural and pastoral support to achieve their study goals. Strong pass rates and high rates of student satisfaction reflect EIT's effectiveness in supporting learners. This is particularly creditable when considering EIT's learner characteristics and the resourcing and practical challenges in delivering services across multiple sites and delivery modes. A stronger evidential base on the impact and

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<sup>2</sup> EIT runs staff conferences every year and in rotation – in 2019, 120 staff attended the allied staff conference; in 2020, 120 teaching staff attended Te Pae Tawhiti, the academic staff conference.

effectiveness of learner support provision could inform ongoing investment and priorities.

## Focus area 2: How effectively is learning assessed?

### Findings and supporting evidence

EIT's effectiveness in assessing learning is underpinned by a comprehensive academic regulatory framework, assessment-related policies and procedures, and appropriate organisational structures and resources for building capability and monitoring consistency.

#### *Policies*

The recent review of EIT's approach to academic integrity is a good example of effective policy review. Following consultation and revision, training resources were developed and disseminated across schools. NZQA found that the rationale for adopting an educative approach to maintaining academic integrity was well understood and widely accepted, and that training had been completed by most staff. Subsequent application of the policy and procedures, including breaches, is being monitored as part of the embedding of this policy.

#### *Assessment design*

The quality and suitability of EIT's assessment arises from consistent application of the learning design framework and assessment design principles. Content specialists are well supported by expert programme development staff and other resources in the development of assessment tasks and materials suitable for delivery mode and level, and to ensure alignment with learning outcomes. Assessment design is developed with industry, as evident in the primary sector teaching, wine science and veterinary nursing programmes. The embedding of mātauranga Māori content into new and revised programmes is gaining momentum. Community resources and support are available to ensure mātauranga Māori content and assessment design is appropriate and authentic. Two institute-wide projects, on work-integrated learning and online delivery, will also canvass the next steps for innovation in assessment design.

#### *Oversight*

EIT's academic committee structure provides an effective hierarchy for reporting, review and monitoring of policies and procedures, and escalating issues as required. As well as confirming results, examiners' meetings provide opportunities for robust discussion on moderation outcomes, achievement trends and variances, and key contributing factors. Improved minuting of these meetings is now providing a better context for the programme cluster committees to understand results. The institutional academic committee is trialling a new process for monitoring the work of the programme cluster

#### *Final*

committees, to strengthen assurance of the robustness and consistency of key academic functions.

### *Quality and suitability*

The systems for maintaining assessment standards generally work well. EIT tutors have access to a shared pool of expert staff with knowledge and skills to provide advice and support for assessment. Capability development is an ongoing focus. One example noted during the evaluation was the workshops and resources related to providing constructive feedback to students on assessments and throughout their learning. Major policy reviews over recent years have provided an opportunity to change tutor attitudes and approaches to moderation, strengthening its value for improvement and consistency.

Examples of good practice in assuring assessment standards include a consistency project in 2019 which reviewed assessment practice across three schools and campuses, resulting in the development of templates and rubrics and an increased focus on moderation across delivery sites. More recently, feedback on group work assessments prompted a review of practice. This has resulted in revised assessment guidelines, including a recommendation that group assessment must not exceed a maximum of 30 per cent for courses. In addition, improvements for management of group work are set out, including guidelines for students, and mechanisms for the recognition of individual contributions to groupwork outcomes. There is no evidence of a plan to evaluate the impact of these changes.

### *Moderation*

Moderation is managed in faculties and schools through three to five-year moderation plans, submitted to a programme cluster committee and reported on annually, and summarised in annual programme reviews. Generally, moderation practice is sound, informing improvements and providing assurance of standards and consistency. However, in other cases, moderation (internal and external) is not yet fully consistent with EIT's own policy guidance or NZQA expectations.<sup>3</sup> In some instances, these reflect challenges associated with supporting significant enrolment growth and delivery at multiple sites. There are also some gaps in meeting the requirement for annual external moderation of degrees. In mitigation, NZQA acknowledges that areas of weakness are known and improvement plans are underway. This is an important area for attention,

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<sup>3</sup> Weaknesses in internal and external moderation were noted in Te Ūranga Waka; the school is responding through Te Pātaka, a self-review and improvement project. EIT met the majority of the national external moderation requirements for NZQA-managed standards for 2018 and 2019. EIT's delivery of the New Zealand Diploma in Business (Level 5) (monitored by NZQA in 2018 and (online) in 2020) overall met requirements. In 2018, NZQA monitoring identified issues with assessment and moderation in the New Zealand Certificate in English Language (Level 4).

and ongoing support and close monitoring is required for quality assurance purposes.

#### *Assessment during lockdown*

The COVID-19 lockdown presented serious challenges to maintaining quality assessment practices. Adjustments to assessments were authorised by programme cluster committees, such as replacing final exams with open book, time-limited assessment, and recording practical sessions for assessment and moderation purposes. Student personal circumstances were accommodated, and additional time and/or support was available to enable students to complete assessment tasks. EIT developed temporary assessment guidelines to provide appropriate authority for these adjustments. An institute-wide review is now reflecting on the learnings from the lockdown and will determine what, if any, changes are made to the standing academic framework.

#### **Conclusion**

EIT has a coherent set of organisational policies, structures and operational processes which assure the overall effectiveness of learner assessment. Opportunities to better align assessment activities with mātauranga Māori content and industry requirements, and for supporting a planned expansion of online delivery are currently being identified, to further improve assessment practice. Expert advice and support is provided to schools to build capability in programme and assessment design that aligns with EIT's learning design framework as well as adherence to assessment-related rules and expectations. Day-to-day management of assessment and moderation practice is subject to ongoing monitoring and review. Recent policy reviews and assessment-related projects have led to improved consistency across EIT's distributed network of provision, although improvement is required in some areas.

Since the initial fieldwork of this review, EIT has noted that further improvements to the management of moderation have occurred. Minutes of Programme Cluster Committee (PCC) meetings include records of moderation discussions, three to five-year moderation plans, and revisions arising from internal and external moderation activities.

## Focus area 3: What are the subsidiary's areas of strength?

### 3.1 Degree and postgraduate programmes, and research

#### Findings and supporting evidence

##### *Research*

EIT's strength in research is founded on a commitment to collaboration with, and adding value to, the wider community. The research and innovation strategy takes a thematic approach, based on regional strengths and priorities, and an overarching commitment to contributing to mātauranga Māori and its development.

The strategy is being enacted through appropriate governance and management committees, and the Research and Innovation Centre, including a growing professoriate. EIT targets investment and practical support for early-career researchers developing proposals and submitting funding applications, as well as accountability processes for teaching time release. EIT collaborates with other education providers and various business and community organisations. EIT is also contributing to national conversations on the research landscape for Te Pūkenga, including definitions of research and funding models for the PBRF.<sup>4</sup>

##### *Performance*

Key metrics on research activity, outputs and income are important indicators of the success of this strategy. EIT performed strongly compared with other ITPs in the 2018 PBRF round. Thirty-nine out of 50 submissions were rated. EIT achieved the highest proportion of A-category ratings across the ITP sector. A growing number of EIT staff are submitting papers to annual ITP research symposiums, and EIT reports that in 2019, 334 research outputs were recorded. Seventy-two per cent of degree teachers met the criteria for 'research active'<sup>5</sup> (46 per cent in 2017). External research income has also increased significantly over recent years.<sup>6</sup>

##### *Value*

The scope and value of EIT's research contribution to the community is evident in various publications<sup>7</sup> and was attested to during this evaluation by community representatives and research partners. Collaborations are effective, enhanced

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<sup>4</sup> Performance Based Research Fund

<sup>5</sup> One quality assured research output per year

<sup>6</sup> 280 per cent increase in external grant income between 2017 and 2019 (\$780,000)

<sup>7</sup> He Rourou Kōrero, EIT Research Showcase, 2018 and 2019 editions, and annual reports

##### *Final*

by strong relationships with communities of interest and the growing depth and credibility of EIT's research capability. Importantly, research outcomes are significant in the context of regional and national priorities. This is particularly evident in relation to health and wellbeing, visual arts and the advancement of mātauranga Māori and its development. There is also an increasing focus on the scholarship of pedagogies, the development of innovative teaching and learning, and sustainability for the Hawke's Bay and Tairāwhiti regions.

#### *Degree and postgraduate programmes*

EIT's strength in research is closely related to the size and breadth of its degree and postgraduate programme portfolio.<sup>8</sup> EIT is committed to providing opportunities for advanced study within its own region, and is responsive to local priorities and international student demand.

EIT's common postgraduate programme structures facilitate responsiveness and agility in responding to local community needs, industry developments and international demand. There are clearly defined learner pathways into and through postgraduate programmes, and various options for Master's research papers. Shared courses present students with opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. These features, together with common programme regulation and oversight by a single institute-wide programme cluster committee, makes it sustainable (both academically and financially) for a small organisation to develop and manage a large number of postgraduate programmes.

The key structural features of EIT's degree and postgraduate portfolio are well documented and could help inform a wider standardised approach to development and delivery. EIT has also built organisational capability in operationalising and managing a coordinated and systematic approach which could usefully inform similar initiatives across the wider network.

#### **Conclusion**

There is strong and varied evidence of EIT performing well in relation to research, effectively building research culture, capability and outputs. EIT researchers are engaged with some important applied research which stakeholders attest to as having value, in particular the community focus and commitment to contributing to new knowledge in the local context, and enhancing Māori research capability. There is potential to further extend EIT's research collaborations and to enhance its contribution to the wider sector.

EIT's standardised approach to postgraduate portfolio development and oversight could be usefully considered by Te Pūkenga as that organisation develops a shared approaches to academic development and management.

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<sup>8</sup> EIT has a large degree and postgraduate portfolio for a small organisation: 17 degrees and 18 postgraduate programmes.

## 3.2 Connections to the region

### Findings and supporting evidence

EIT is an education provider committed to working with communities and meeting the needs of its region. Regional characteristics that are relevant to EIT's approach include a large, young population – a higher proportion (than the national average) of whom are not in employment, education or training – and several significant concentrations of 'at-risk' youth. More of the general population have no formal qualifications than is the case elsewhere. Currently, employment is skewed towards manual and non-professional roles. Strong employment growth is projected in construction, utilities and primary industries, as well as food processing.

Effective connections with the region are central to EIT's educational and organisational performance in achieving its strategic priorities<sup>9</sup> and sustainable provision of vocational and professional education and training. EIT aligns its delivery to local needs, drawing on longstanding and effective partnerships to leverage the benefits of education for social, cultural and economic prosperity for its region.

#### *Accessibility*

EIT continues to find ways to engage with communities living in remote locations<sup>10</sup> and to ensure access to quality tertiary education and training and to provide support for community development. EIT has a flexible and devolved approach to delivery which is attracting a large number of Māori students and their whānau to participate in EIT programmes.<sup>11</sup>

EIT's commitment to supporting accessibility and transitions into education and/or employment also extends to partnerships with secondary education providers. EIT has one of New Zealand's largest trades academies, Te Ara o Tākitimu, which had grown to 770 funded places in 2019, involving almost all secondary schools in the Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay region.

#### *Partnerships*

EIT has longstanding relationships with local iwi, particularly Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Kahungunu, and has a variety of partnership arrangements with iwi, hapū and Māori community groups. These arrangements provide opportunities for partners to influence the curriculum, for example incorporating mātauranga

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<sup>9</sup> EIT has six strategic priorities: Success for Māori, Student Success, Connectedness, Enquiring Minds, Smart Thinking, Ngā Kaitiaki (EIT 2019 Annual Report)

<sup>10</sup> 1800 students (800 EFTS) are learning outside of the main campuses.

<sup>11</sup> In 2019, Māori comprised 46 per cent of all EFTS at Hawke's Bay and 78 per cent of all EFTS at the Tairāwhiti campus.

Māori content, and to ensure graduate outcomes will support the growth of the Māori economy. EIT's effectiveness in connecting with Māori communities is also supported by high profile contributions to research into Māori health and wellbeing, and excellence in and promotion of Māori visual arts.

EIT's commitment and connection to its Māori communities is also reflected in its longstanding Māori strategic advisory group. This is a governance group which provides strategic guidance and insight into the impact of EIT's connectedness within the region, and with iwi/Māori communities in particular. The group also monitors and advises EIT on the Māori student success framework.

A key focus of the institute is to support the regional economy. EIT actively engages with employers and local body and business sector leaders to ensure alignment of programmes with the needs of key primary industries. EIT is a longstanding member of regional economic development strategy and governance groups. Local businesses contribute as guest speakers, support work placements and internships, and employ graduates. Recently, EIT collaborated with a range of private and public industry groups to develop innovative facilities to support outdoor learning and sustainability (Ōtātara Outdoor Learning Centre), and sports and health science (EIT Institute of Sport and Health). These facilities have significant potential to strengthen community wellbeing and sustainability.

This review found EIT approaches community partnerships with a genuine willingness to listen, to share power and decision-making, and offer a practical focus on bringing resources and skills to the table to support community aspirations.

## **Conclusion**

EIT's strength in this focus area is embedded in its culture. It represents a way of working which relies on:

- building a genuine and long-term commitment to connecting with the region, throughout all levels of the organisation, recognising the mutual benefits for ITPs and their communities in strengthening and supporting access to and participation in relevant tertiary education regionally
- developing organisational capability and accountability for community-based engagement and authentic partnerships with key stakeholders.

EIT serves the needs of its region well, as evidenced by longstanding partnerships, stakeholder testimony and its own organisational performance information. EIT's understanding of the value and impact of its connection to regions could be strengthened through researching the key features of its partnership approach which may serve as an exemplar of good practice to the wider tertiary sector.

## *Disclaimer*

*The findings in this report have been reached by means of a modified 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 fraud<sup>12</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>12</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.