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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Southern Institute of Technology

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 4 September 2013

Contents

MoE Number: 6015

NZQA Reference: C07630

Date of EER visit: 16-20 July 2012

Final report

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Southern Institute of Technology (SIT)
Type:	Institute of Technology
Location:	Tay Street, Invercargill
First registered:	1971
Number of students:	Domestic: 3,658 equivalent full-time students[1]
	International: 451 equivalent full-time students[2]
Number of staff:	164 full-time equivalents (teaching staff) and 143 full-time equivalents (allied staff)[1]
Scope of active accreditation:	SIT holds accreditations for a wide range of qualifications ranging from level 1 to postgraduate level. Full details are available on the NZQA website.[3] SIT has current accreditation with the Nursing Council of New Zealand in respect of its Bachelor of Nursing degree, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate in Health Science, and Diploma in Enrolled Nursing; and with the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants in respect of the CA programme – comprising a Bachelor of Commerce degree and associated graduate diplomas. SIT's degrees have all been

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[1] *Southern Institute of Technology Annual Report 2011* (2012), p. 54.

[2] *Southern Institute of Technology Annual Report 2011* (2012), p. 6.

[3] http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/course-accreditations.do?providerId=601558001&delSiteInd=1&headOfficeId=601558001

	recently monitored by externally appointed degree monitors, as required, initially by ITP Quality, and currently by NZQA.
Sites:	In addition to Invercargill, SIT offers selected programmes in Christchurch, Queenstown, and Gore. SIT also has an extensive provision of online programmes that offer pathways to higher qualifications at SIT and other tertiary education providers.
Distinguishing characteristic	SIT is characterised by strong industry and community support, and operates a zero-fees scheme, which was initially partially funded by industry and community contributions during the establishment of the scheme. It has been self-sustaining since 2003.
Previous quality assurance history:	SIT was last audited by ITP Quality in June 2008, at which time the audit team recommended to ITP Quality that SIT's Quality Assured Status be confirmed for a period of four years. At the Mid-Term Quality Review undertaken in July 2010, it was recommended that ITP Quality endorse SIT's Quality Assured Status, noting, 'Southern Institute of Technology is using effective self-assessment, internal audit, and review processes to help maintain quality consistent with its Quality Assured Status'.
	Since 2006, SIT has engaged a moderation coordinator and made changes to its internal systems and staff training in order to enhance compliance. At NZQA's request, a comprehensive report on moderation was provided to the NZQA external evaluation and review (EER) team prior to the 2012 EER visit.[4]
Other:	SIT experienced considerable disruption to its activities and services as a result of the Canterbury earthquakes. SIT's Christchurch campus accommodated several of CPIT's programmes, staff, and students in the first half of 2011 (at no cost to CPIT), and several of Aoraki

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[4] *EER – Moderation actions and improvements* (2012, May). Memorandum to Lead Evaluator, 49 pp.

Polytechnic's programmes, staff, and students throughout 2011 and 2012. This required significant rescheduling of SIT timetabling and compromises on space and other resources during a period when SIT's staff were dealing with their own personal and professional challenges associated with the earthquakes. Providing additional training for over 130 additional EFTS at SIT's Invercargill campus and for the SIT2LRN programme also presented challenges to SIT's staff and overall resourcing.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Programmes selected for evaluation were drawn from all four of the faculties of SIT, and included a selection of those offered at other sites (Christchurch and Gore). The programmes spanned New Zealand Qualification Framework (NZQF) levels from level 2 to degrees. SIT puts considerable emphasis on providing pathways to programmes within the institute and to those offered by other organisations, including through its online delivery system: SIT2LRN. The effectiveness of such pathways is a theme for some of the focus areas selected for evaluation shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Programme focus areas			
Programme	**NZQF level**	**No. of equivalent full-time students (EFTS)**	**Notes**
Business Administration	2-3	60	Programme evaluated at Gore and Invercargill.
Automotive	2 (Invercargill)	35	Programme evaluated at both Christchurch and Invercargill; response to differing industry needs accounts for level 2 programme being offered in Invercargill and level 3 in Christchurch.
	3 (Christchurch)	72	
Pre-Entry Music	2	10	Evaluated as a cluster of linked programmes, with some emphasis on the value of staircasing.
Certificate in Intermediate Contemporary Music	4	14	
Bachelor of Contemporary Music	Degree	49❶	
Certificate in Audio	4	16	Evaluated as linked programmes.

Production			
Bachelor of Audio Production	Degree	73❷	
Bachelor of Information Technology	Degree	90	Has underpinning qualifications; international students comprise a significant proportion of enrolments.
Pre-Entry Health Certificate	3	100	Evaluated as a cluster of pre-entry and foundation programmes, specifically those offered online through SIT2LRN, leading to a range of health-related programmes.
Intermediate	4	52	
Diploma in Enrolled Nursing			
Bachelor of Nursing❸	Degree		
Bachelor Therapeutic and Sports Massage	Degree	Y1, 25	

❶ Enrolments in first year of degree are 24 EFTS; in second year, 16; in third year, nine.

❷ Enrolments in first year of degree are 29 EFTS; in second year, 28; in third year, 16.

❸ Because the Bachelor of Nursing degree has a further monitoring visit from the Nursing Council scheduled for August/September 2012 (*Monitoring report on a programme leading to registration as a nurse – Southern Institute of Technology*; letter to chief executive from Nursing Council of New Zealand, 19 December 2011), this degree was included only insofar as it is a destination of the cluster.

SIT has been the principal organisation behind the development of the Committed Learners Project[5], which identifies and presents strategies to enhance student engagement. Implementation of the findings of this project is expected to have a beneficial effect on the support offered to learners, both within teaching areas and within learning support – a non-programme focus area.

The mandatory focus areas – governance, management, and strategy, student learning support, and the achievement and support of international students – were also included.

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[5] Bodkin-Allen, S., Hoffman, J., & Whittle, J. (2012, April). *Report on the Committed Learners Project*. Invercargill: SIT Research Institute.

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.

The evaluation team comprised a lead evaluator and three external evaluators, who visited SIT for five days (16-20 July 2012). For the programme focus areas, a sub-team of evaluators met with programme leaders, teaching staff, students, and members of advisory committees and other external stakeholders, principally at Invercargill, but also at Gore and Christchurch for selected programmes. Discussions were also held with the chief executive, members of the management team, the academic board, members of Council, and the Faculty of Health, Humanities and Computing Research Committee. Conversations were also held with the authors of the report of the Committed Learners Project, the manager and staff in the Learning Assistance Unit, and the manager and staff of the international office.

In addition, the evaluation team perused an extensive range of corporate documents, programme reviews relevant to the focus areas, and information relevant to student support and international students (including that related to the implementation of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students).

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Southern Institute of Technology.**

The mission statement for SIT commits it to providing 'quality applied vocational education which equips people with the knowledge and skills to be effective industry participants'.[6] The educational opportunities provided by SIT are highly relevant[7] and of considerable value to Invercargill and the wider region, contributing $112 million and 530 jobs in 2010 alone.[8] This continues a trend apparent from the introduction of the zero-fees scheme[9], and has contributed to Southland's and Invercargill's relative economic well-being.

SIT's educational programmes are developed with industry input through industry advisory committees. The comments of members of these committees and the graduate destination data the institute collects suggest that students who complete qualifications are indeed effective industry participants. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that there are other valuable outcomes – improved self-confidence, enhanced literacy and numeracy, and work-readiness – that students acquire during the SIT experience, whether or not the qualification is completed.

SIT also collaborates with other tertiary education providers. Examples include contracts with industry training organisations (ITOs) for the provision of training[10], collaboration with other institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs) in the production of materials for distance delivery, and the delivery of degrees in association with or on behalf of universities and ITPs.[11]

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[6] *Strategic Vision 2012-2016* (2012, February). Southern Institute of Technology.

[7] *An assessment of the demand for and supply of labour in Southland region* (2008, February). Report by Infometrics for Venture Southland. See also: Southland. In *Quarterly Economic Monitor* (2012, March). Infometrics, http://www.southlandnz.com/Portals/0/Documents/Business/Quarterly%20Economic/Southland_2012_03.pdf

[8] Stokes, S., Dixon, H., & Nana, G. (2011). *An economic impact report of the Southern Institute of Technology*. Wellington: Business and Economic Research Ltd. BERL #5094.

[9] *Economic impact on Invercargill of SIT's zero fees policy* (2002). Infometrics Consulting.

[10] An example is SIT working with the Plumbing, Gasfitting, Drainlaying and Roofing ITO to develop delivery materials for the ITO's off-job training which includes distance learning. This project is due for completion at the end of 2012, with the outcome that all six providers will utilise the same material and training will be consistent nationally.

[11] Examples include the Bachelor of Sport and Exercise degree, with Auckland University of Technology; and the Bachelor of Commerce, with Eastern Institute of Technology.

SIT clearly recognises the need for, and value to students in, providing pathways to its higher-level programmes. The institute's degrees, for example, have underpinning introductory certificates which provide an opportunity for both staff and students to become aware of student readiness for higher learning. The online programmes – SIT2LRN – are specifically targeted at students seeking to enhance their knowledge and skills in this way, and graduates generally perform well in the destination programmes to which the introductory programmes lead. Across all SIT2LRN programmes in 2010, 47 per cent of students were retained, compared with 23 per cent achieved by the national online and distance provider of polytechnic education. In addition, 44 per cent progressed to higher-level programmes. This is 14 per cent higher than the sector median, and 15 per cent higher than the national distance and online provider of polytechnic education.

Among ITPs, SIT ranks highly in progressions, which attests to the effectiveness of its pathways. SIT's educational performance, as reflected by course and qualification completions, has been below the sector median, but has improved since 2009 and continues to trend upwards. SIT has outlined strategies, in both the previous and current investment plans[12], to improve its retention of students. The fact that retention is a specific focus of the Committed Learners Project initiated by SIT[13] shows a continuing commitment to develop strategies for improvement. Surveys of students indicate high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and SIT's welfare and learning support services.

SIT has a large cohort of Māori students. The organisation's commitment to addressing the needs of these students is demonstrated through initiatives such as Tauira Tautoko (Māori Student Support Centre), the flexibility of the distance education programmes (SIT2LRN), and strategic partnerships with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. As a result, Māori educational performance is continuously improving – in 2011, course completions for Māori were 64 per cent and qualification completions were 54 per cent.

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[12] *Investment Plan 2011-2013*. Invercargill: Southern Institute of Technology, p. 21. *Investment Plan 2013-2015*. Invercargill: Southern Institute of Technology.

[13] Bodkin-Allen, S., Hoffman, J., & Whittle, J. (2012, April). *Report on the Committed Learners Project*. Invercargill: SIT Research Institute, p. 9.

Final report

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Southern Institute of Technology.**

The Mid-Term Quality Review in 2010 commented:

> 'SIT has made significant steps towards the development of a self-assessment system based on an evaluative approach to quality assurance. The processes are consistent with SIT's general management style and approach to educational performance and are in accordance with the general principles developed by the NZQA'.

Among good practices identified at that time were the restructuring of the quality management system as a document consistent with the self-assessment process being implemented by SIT, the development of a detailed and informative manual for SIT's Focus Area Capability Study, progressive induction of staff to the self-assessment process by inclusion as evaluators in assessment panels, and implementing processes that provide better information on the effectiveness of teaching using peer observations.

The self-assessment system has been subsequently updated. This has resulted in self-assessment activity being undertaken both at the programme and support service level, and also centrally through a process of formal self-assessment reviews.

While SIT notes that the evaluation criteria may differ between each focus area depending on the context of the review and the specific requirements of a given focus area, it considers that guidance provided to staff undertaking reviews enables them to proceed through the review in a logical manner that supports sound and consistent evaluation. The evaluation team considers that the self-assessment process could be strengthened by concentrating the focus of self-assessment at the programme and service level, and limiting the use of sampling to a level required to undertake validation and moderation of this self-assessment work. In essence, in order to compare the effectiveness of programmes, the same criteria need to be used.

The relationships between all the components of SIT's self-assessment are not always well understood by all staff interviewed by the evaluation team, although staff do understand SIT's self-assessment process as a whole. There was also some variation in staff appreciation of the use of information to target improvements and to monitor the impact of any changes made, i.e. whether the changes were effective, although there was a well-founded institutional understanding of this information and its use.

Overall, SIT's complex and detailed self-assessment system reflects a genuine organisation-wide commitment to self-assessment which has resulted in some worthwhile improvements in educational performance. There remains work to do,

especially in understanding the impact of changes made as a result of self-assessment.

SIT has implemented a number of new initiatives expected to result in better educational performance.

Findings[14]

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

There has been an annual improvement in SIT's course and qualification completions over 2009-2011 (Table 2), although these remain below the sector median. SIT performs particularly well in relation to progression, where it is ranked fifth in the ITP sub-sector.

Table 2. Course and qualification completions, 2009-2011		2009*	2010†	2011‡
Measure		**2009***	**2010†**	**2011‡**
Course completions	SIT	66%	65%	70%
	Sector median	70%	76%	79%
	Rank	15	18	18
Qualification completions	SIT	42%	43%	55%
	Sector median	51%	57%	64%
	Rank	18	19	18
Progression	SIT	43%	45%	40%
	Sector median	29%	29%	32%
	Rank	3	3	5
Retention	SIT	38%	39%	38%
	Sector median	47%	51%	55%
	Rank	16	18	16
* http://www.tec.govt.nz/Reports/2009/SIT.pdf † http://www.tec.govt.nz/Reports/2010/SIT.pdf ‡ http://www.tec.govt.nz/Reports/2011/SIT.pdf (downloaded 12 November 2012)				

The increases in SIT's completions have resulted from more stringent admission processes, including pre-entry interviews (e.g. for the Bachelor of Information Technology), assessments of literacy and numeracy (e.g. in the automotive programmes), and increased focus on maintaining class attendance. SIT finds

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[14] The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

attendance to be correlative with retention, and therefore this is a requirement of students enrolled in the zero-fees scheme. More attention is also being paid to provision of support for learners (see also section 1.5) in the expectation that student engagement will be enhanced[15], and thereby course and qualification completions further increased.

Within SIT's online and distance learning provision, educational performance compares favourably with other providers. As mentioned previously, across all SIT's online and blended delivery programmes (SIT2LRN programmes) in 2010, 47 per cent of students were retained, compared with the 23 per cent achieved by the national online and distance provider of polytechnic education. In addition, 44 per cent progressed to higher-level programmes. This is 14 per cent higher than the sector median and 15 per cent higher than the national distance and online provider of polytechnic education.

The educational performance of Māori at SIT is also increasing (Table 3), which is partly attributed to the support provided by Tauira Tautoko (the Māori Student Support Centre; see also section 1.5).

Table 3. Recent educational achievement by Māori students*				
		Levels 1-3	Level 4 and above	Overall
Course completions	Investment plan target	60%	68%	
	Achievement	59%	66%	64%
Qualification completions	Investment plan target	45%	60%	
	Achievement	48%	58%	54%
*From *Annual Report 2011* (2012). SIT, p. 11.				

In 2011, over half of SIT's learners obtained the qualifications sought; in committing to raising this measure of educational performance, SIT has implemented a range of strategies. Some students who do not complete qualifications are known anecdotally to acquire background knowledge and skills, improve their literacy and numeracy, and to have the attitudes, time management, and social skills appropriate to make them work-ready. Indeed, some are known to have been accepted into apprenticeships and employment. Although students who do not complete qualifications are not systematically surveyed, feedback is received about these outcomes from students themselves and from industry.

The graduate destination survey of 2011 records that 86 per cent of graduates are employed, studying, or self-employed (for earlier years see Table 4).

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[15] Bodkin-Allen, S., Hoffman, J., & Whittle, J. (2012, April). *Report on the Committed Learners Project*. Invercargill: SIT Research Institute.

Table 4. Employment outcomes for 2009 and 2010 graduates*		
Outcomes	**2009**	**2010**
Employed	67%	55%
Self-employed	6%	6%
Not employed	20%	12%
Other	8%	28%
*Data from *Annual Report 2010* (2011). SIT, p. 14; *Annual Report 2011* (2012). SIT, p. 12		

Graduates advise that they have acquired relevant skills and knowledge, and 95 per cent indicated that they would study at SIT in the future. SIT graduate surveys provide very useful information at a high level that students have a positive view of the quality and value of SIT programmes. This information is complemented by some programme staff maintaining contact with their graduates through the use of social media, and telephone surveys of graduate destinations. Such approaches would appear to be worth considering more widely across SIT, and the organisation agrees that further work is required to improve consistency of graduate destination data at the programme level.

Programmes are reviewed annually, to look at educational performance and improvement plans implemented. Detailed programme reviews are also carried out periodically under the whole-of-institute quality management system, and may also be initiated by the chief executive to attend to particular issues relating to educational performance. The improvements in retention in the music programmes and the Bachelor of Information Technology, for example, were brought about through these reviews.

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

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

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

SIT has a high level of engagement with the community and local industry. Community investment – not only by major community funders, but also by the business community – enabled SIT to establish the zero-fees scheme, and the institute has, in turn, provided benefits to the community. These benefits are most obviously SIT's graduates, who bring their skills and knowledge to the economic and social well-being of the region, but also its own contribution through involvement in industry and business, as well as its role in fostering a vibrant local performing arts scene. The continued support for the zero-fees scheme by industry and business shows that these sectors value SIT's educational provision and its other activities.

Members of programme advisory committees attest to the value of the education and training provided by SIT in providing capable graduates who meet the employment needs (e.g. in the Bachelor of Information Technology and the automotive programmes) of Invercargill and Southland, a region where there is an unsatisfied demand for employees, particularly in trades and service industries. An Infometrics report notes particular shortages in Southland in information technology, food hospitality, and personal services, and an oversupply of people qualified in the creative arts.[16] In order to ensure that SIT's graduates' contribution to economic and social well-being continues to be valued in the longer term, SIT's Council and senior management are continually involved in identifying future educational opportunities with organisations and enterprises associated with projected regional developments, particularly in the food processing and energy sectors.

For learners, the value of the outcome is generally employment or improved prospects of employment, or admission to higher-level programmes. Data from 2011 shows that 86 per cent of SIT graduates surveyed in 2011 achieved successful employment or further study outcomes on completion of their qualifications. In addition, 87 per cent of the graduates surveyed believed that the programme from which they graduated had enhanced their career prospects. That 95 per cent of graduates responding to the survey said that they 'would be prepared' to study at SIT again is an indication of the value learners placed on their study at SIT.

There is evidence from data supplied by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) that success in SIT2LRN online and blended delivery programmes has resulted in admission to higher health-related qualifications at other institutions, while individual students currently enrolled in SIT2LRN programmes commented on how their respective degree programmes were preparing them well for specialist study. Retention and completion of SIT2LRN programmes compare favourably with other distance and online education providers (see Table 9, section 2.3).

The skills and knowledge attained by students also contribute to activities that are valued by the wider community. Examples include the annual Kids Concert, which contemporary music students perform at, and the making of films and local documentaries by digital media students.[17] The community also values the application of research undertaken by staff investigating local and regional social[18]

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[16] *An Assessment of the Demand for and Supply of Labour in Southland Region (2008, February)*. Report by Infometrics for Venture Southland, p. 28, http://www.infometrics.co.nz/reports/southland_labour.pdf

[17] Chief Executive Officer's Report. In *Annual Report (2011). Southern Institute of Technology*, p. 4.

[18] A specific example is, 'I can do a dolphin jump I can', An evaluation of the Swim Safe Southland Learn to Swim Pilot Programme'. In Bodkin-Allen, S., & Whittle, J. (2011, November). *Research Report 2010-2011*. Southern Institute of Technology, pp. 5-6.

and environmental[19] concerns, and student projects, as for example in the final year of the Bachelor of Information Technology.

At a programme level, capability in self-assessment in this area is demonstrated by the inclusion of stakeholder perspectives into the development of new programmes and the improvement of current programmes (i.e. quality management area QM2), and by the institute's use of the findings of course evaluations by students to drive improvements.

At an institutional level, the evaluation team noted many initiatives that have added value to SIT students, such as the initiation and continuation of the zero-fees scheme. This is perhaps the paramount example, but other examples of projects and facilities developed as a consequence of self-assessment of the needs of specific programmes or of the wider community could be cited (e.g. the construction of new trades facilities, the development of downtown venues into spaces for performing arts students as well as the wider community, and the development of former motels into student accommodation).

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

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

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

The needs of learners include access to tertiary education, the requisite literacy, numeracy, and study skills to take advantage of the educational opportunities SIT provides, and the relevance of skills and knowledge in the qualification to employment or other graduate outcomes sought. The zero-fees scheme is a major way in which learners' needs for access to tertiary education in Southland are matched, demonstrated by the significant growth in student numbers and an increased diversity of programmes offered at SIT since the scheme's introduction.[20] The specific needs of Māori and Pasifika peoples in respect of their cultures are well matched by on-campus spaces and support services (e.g. Tauira Tautoko – Māori Student Support, Pacific Island Student Support), as suggested by the proportion of Māori enrolments at SIT (14.7 per cent in 2011) exceeding the regional proportion (11.8 per cent). Similarly matched are the needs of international students in adjusting to the New Zealand lifestyle and the approach to

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[19] Specific examples are, 'The state of the Mararoa cold-water springs: a baseline study of cold-water springs in Southland', and 'Water quality in the Waituna Wetland in Southland. In Bodkin-Allen, S., & Whittle, J. (2011, November). *Research Report 2010-2011.* Southern Institute of Technology, pp. 35-36; and p. 37, respectively.

[20] Clayton-Brown, K. (2012, January 17). Zero fees a runaway success. *The Southland Times.*

teaching and learning in New Zealand tertiary education. The graduate destination survey and other feedback from graduates indicate that their employment needs are well matched by their qualifications, a view supported in the case of degrees by the degree monitors' reports.

SIT has embedded literacy and numeracy testing in many programmes[21] (examples from the focus areas are the automotive programmes and SIT2LRN), and this enables tutors to respond proactively to learning needs related to these matters. In a similar way, tutors and the Learning Assistance Unit are able to match the needs of students for greater capability in academic writing and study skills, e.g. in the certificate programme underpinning the Bachelor of Contemporary Music.

The needs of industry are matched through the advice provided by industry advisory committees on programmes or clusters of programmes and the knowledge of individual members of staff. In the redevelopment of programmes, SIT establishes specialist project teams to undertake research into stakeholder requirements and endeavours to ensure that these are incorporated into the new programme.

Matching of student and industry needs is also demonstrated by examples such as students in the audio programmes gaining experience with industry-standard equipment and software, and students in the Bachelor of Information Technology programme gaining a high level of competence with Microsoft products and Cisco equipment and services. Further evidence of the strong support, consultation, and close alignment is demonstrated through the SIT award ceremony. In 2012, 137 awards of trophies, vouchers, industry equipment, and money were provided and presented by local industry to honour those students who achieved highly in their programmes. Industry representatives are consulted annually to confirm their commitment to the awards. All current donors have confirmed their commitment, and a number of other companies have contacted SIT to become part of the award ceremony.

The development of programmes includes analysis focused on (a) matching the needs of industry and the community in terms of employment and other outcomes[22]; (b) matching the needs of students in terms of style of educational delivery, the use of technology, and the resources and support services required; and (c) matching the needs of SIT in terms of the programmes' financial viability and sustainability. Such needs analysis of programmes is continual, triggered either by the institute's self-assessment processes and external policy changes, realised through the investment plan, or by internal issues.

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[21] 'The proportion of Level 1-3 courses offered that contain embedded literacy and numeracy – 65%', from *Annual Report 2011* (2012). Southern Institute of Technology, p. 11.

[22] Review criteria and data sources. In SIT Operations and Quality Management System. QM4.4 1-1.

SIT was one of only six ITPs that received additional TEC funding for Skill for Canterbury Trades Training in 2012, one of only four ITPs to be awarded level 1 and 2 TEC contestable funding for 2013, and one of only three ITPs to receive an equivalent or slightly higher allocation of TEC funding in 2013 as 2012. These funding decisions indicate a high level of confidence by the TEC in SIT's programmes being appropriately aligned to the Government's Tertiary Education Strategy and SIT's ability to effectively deliver these programmes to learners.

However, while there are a range of systems in place to gauge the needs of learners and other key stakeholders, there is not comprehensive evidence across the focus areas that the analysis and use of this information has resulted in improvements in processes that support teaching and learning or learner achievements and outcomes.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

SIT uses a comprehensive and coherent approach to the evaluation of teaching effectiveness, which includes: (i) student evaluation surveys; (ii) feedback from the supervision and appraisal system; (iii) a structured staff training system for staff at all levels of their career; (iv), a 'reflective teaching practice' system that provides a structured approach to peer observation and feedback, and is used to monitor moderation of assessment and prompt improvements; the feedback is provided through the degree monitoring system.

The effectiveness of teaching is widely supported by the student satisfaction surveys. These surveys are comprehensive in scope, rating both satisfaction and importance for each of the 51 questions (Table 5).

For the programme focus areas, overall satisfaction ratings are about 4 (on a 5-point scale, with 5 the highest rated), and differ little throughout the academic year (if the survey was run twice). There was no significant difference in satisfaction with teaching for the same programme offered at different sites. For degree students, satisfaction levels tended to be marginally higher in the first year of the degree. An action plan and report is required where an item has a satisfaction rating below 3 – which few do. From the students' perspective, the surveys suggest good quality teaching. SIT evaluates these reviews at both a faculty and institute level, which enables broad or systematic themes to be identified and addressed.

Table 5. Elements of the student satisfaction survey		No. of questions in ...	
Section	Theme	*Theme*	*Section*❶
A	BEFORE THE COURSE – Information	3	9
	BEFORE THE COURSE – Selection Entry Procedure	2	
	BEFORE THE COURSE – Enrolment Process	4	
B❷	AFTER STARTING – Induction	3	24
	AFTER STARTING – Teaching Delivery Methods	15	
	AFTER STARTING – Complaints/Appeals	2	
	AFTER STARTING – Academic Results	3	
	AFTER STARTING – Feedback from students	1	
C	FACILITIES PROVIDED	5	5
D	SUPPORT SERVICES	10	12
	SUPPORT SERVICES – Cultural Needs	1	
	SUPPORT SERVICES – Disabilities	1	
E❸	OVERALL SATISFACTION	1	1

Notes

❶ No averages of satisfaction or importance ratings are provided for each section.

❷ With Section B comprising 48 per cent of the questions, the overall satisfaction rating (E) is a proxy of the quality of teaching.

❸ No range of values (or standard deviation) is provided with E that would indicate the 'spread' of satisfaction.

SIT has undertaken a research project which 'brings together a "basket" of good practice examples gathered from Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand in 2010-2011', involving (i) a review of current literature; (ii) a targeted survey of the current practices of nine ITPs to enhance student engagement; and (iii) identification of good teaching practice from interviews of teaching staff from a range of disciplines at six ITPs.[23]

The findings and recommendations of the report were presented in terms of a learning cycle (viz. 1. 'First impressions'; 2. 'Getting off to a good start: the first four to six weeks'; 3. 'Staying the course: mid-course and end-course; 4. 'Post-script: remaining engaged post-course'), and strategic themes (viz. [a] 'promoting student engagement as a whole-of-institute goal'; [b] 'the engagement of Māori and Pasifika learners'; [c] 'the engagement of international students'; [d] the role of technology in fostering student engagement'). This report will prompt further discussions and

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[23] Bodkin-Allen, S., Hoffman, J., & Whittle, J. (2012, April). Report on the Committed Learners Project. Invercargill: SIT Research Institute, pp. 51-57.

self-assessment related to teaching and learning[24], including enhanced student engagement[25], and this should redress issues of student motivation.[26] Indeed, an initiative is already being implemented within the Trades and Technology Faculty to increase student engagement (see also section 2.5) and the leaders of the Committed Learners Project have held meetings with staff groups throughout SIT to discuss the report's findings, disseminate information from it, raise awareness of the need for and value of engagement, and to share 'best practice' ideas that the research has identified.

SIT has formal staff supervision, appraisal, and development systems for its teachers. Teaching staff undergo annual performance appraisals, and where issues of teaching effectiveness are identified, staff are required to address them through additional training, professional development plans, or through additional monitoring or observation of their teaching practice. Comprehensive teaching observation is already undertaken, and from 2013 all tenured staff will be required to engage in this activity, the results of which will inform staff development.

SIT offers 12 Bachelor's degrees, four graduate certificates, 11 graduate diplomas, and two postgraduate diplomas. Accordingly, as well as undertaking research that informs and leads to improvement in teaching and practice, SIT staff undertake discipline-based research that supports those programmes. The 2011 research report showcases 28 research projects and notes the establishment of the SIT Research Institute to support staff research and engage in collaborative research projects.[27] The degree monitors made favourable comments about the research activities of staff involved in the Bachelor of Therapeutic and Sports Massage, the Bachelor of Information Technology, the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation, the Bachelor of Contemporary Music, and the Bachelor of Audio Production; but encouraged more research to be undertaken in the Bachelor of Environmental Management, the Bachelor of Fashion (Design and Technology), and the Bachelor of Digital Media.

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[24] Umbach, P.D., & Wawrzynski, M.R., (2005). *Faculty do matter: the role of college faculty in student learning and engagement.* Research in Higher Education, 46, 2, 153-184.

[25] Engagement at programme level could be measured using elements of the AUSSE survey of students or similar surveys, as in: McCormick, A.C., Kinzie, J., & Korkmaz, A. (2011). Understanding evidence-based improvement in higher education. The case of student engagement. Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, New Orleans, April 2011.

[26] The 2011 Programme Self-Assessment Analysis for the Certificate in Automotive Engineering (Light) notes a concern about 'the number of students that are leaving the programme due to a lack of motivation or ability to complete the programme'; the report for the Bachelor of Therapeutic and Sports Massage noted that, 'the student study commitment was poor'.

[27] Bodkin-Allen, S., & Whittle, J. (Eds) (2011, November). *Southern Institute of Technology Research Report 2010-2011.* SIT, 44 pp.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

In the programme focus areas, student satisfaction with support services is rated highly.[28] SIT provides a wide range of central support services, health, counselling, disability support, and childcare and employment support, for which comprehensive annual self-assessment reports were provided to the evaluation team. These reports identify areas for attention and derived actions, but currently lack measures of effectiveness of the proposed actions. SIT also provides cultural support services such as Taurira Tautoko, a peer support scheme, literacy and numeracy support, and the Learning Assistance Unit.[29] In addition, there are other specialised support services for Youth Guarantee students and international students.[30] Student handbooks and other admission documents include information about these services.

Learning support is also provided by teaching staff, and students may raise issues directly with programme managers and other staff. The Committed Learners Project report, 'explores a range of good practice examples from within SIT and other ITPs, designed to foster student engagement, improve student retention, and enhance successful completion of programmes', through undertaking 'a review of the literature relating to student engagement; a questionnaire distributed to a variety of staff employed at ITPs, including those in administrative and management roles; and interviews with teaching staff and those involved in support'. Eight conclusions and eight recommendations are the consequence of the project report[31], many of which will resonate with current or developing practices in other ITPs. The report's central 'message' – already being presented at staff meetings and fora – is to promote enhancement of student engagement early in their study programme, which is expected to enhance retention and completion. Implementation seems likely to lift the provision and effectiveness of educational support across SIT, both within programmes and at the central student

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[28] Section D of Programme Review Results – Student Surveys. *In Student Support 2011. Self-Assessment Review.* (2012, February). SIT, p. 47.

[29] A satisfaction survey of the Learning Assistance Unit shows a tight cluster of scores (4.1 to 4.3 out of 5), but the number of participants is very small (20), and may not be representative of the users of the service (viz. 189 advised on a 1:1 basis, 775 at workshops/seminars, 436 students who 'dropped in' for short sessions). In *Student Support 2011 Self-Assessment Review* (2012, February). Southern Institute of Technology, pp. 32-34.

[30] The pre-arrival guide – *International Arrivals* – provided to agents, and the *International Student Handbook* detail the particular support services provided to international students.

[31] *Report on the Committed Learners Project* (2012 April). SIT Research Institute.

support level. Implementation of an initiative in the Trades and Technology Faculty to support student engagement and retention is already under way.

As previously mentioned, SIT provides significant support for Māori students, including through Tauira Tautoko, the Māori liaison officer, and through the strategic partnership with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. A measure of the effectiveness of support given to Māori students at SIT is the higher than targeted completion of courses and qualifications in 2011 (Table 6). This suggests SIT is on track to meet its targets by the end of the period covered by the investment plan, in which the targets were negotiated with the TEC.

NZQF level	Investment plan target (2011-2013)			Actual in 2011			Difference Actual - Target D_a-D_t
	All (A$_t$)	*Māori (M$_t$)*	*Difference D_t=(M$_t$-A$_t$)*	*All (A$_a$)*	*Māori (M$_a$)*	*Difference D_a=(M$_a$-A$_a$)*	
	Course completions						
L1-L3	70%	60%	-10%	65%	59%	-6%	+4%
≥L4	74%	68%	-6%	73%	66%	-7%	-1%
	Qualification completions						
L1-L3	50%	45%	-5%	52%	48%	-4%	+1%
≥L4	60%	69%	0%	55%	58%	+3%	+3%

Table 6. Comparison between targeted and actual achievement of Māori students at SIT*

*Annual Report 2011 (2012, April). Southern Institute of Technology, p. 11.

Student evaluations provide evidence that support services are perceived by students to meet their needs and contribute to their SIT experience.[32] An international perspective on the effectiveness of student support at SIT is provided by the benchmarking activity of SIT with SAE Institute/Qantm in Australia, which identified fewer areas of good practice for SIT than for SAE/Qantm, but fewer suggested areas of improvement for SIT than SAE/Qantm (Table 7). Of course, the real value in such activities is in the discussions that inform and result from the exercise.

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[32] Appendix 1.0 Programme review outcomes 2010 and 2011. *In Student Support 2011 Self Assessment Review*. (2012, February). SIT, pp. 46-47.

Table 7. Benchmarking of SIT and SAE Institute/Qantm*				
Attribute	No. of good practices identified for…		No. of areas of improve- ment identified for...	
	SAE/Qantm	*SIT*	*SAE/Qantm*	*SIT*
Initial enquiry, admission, enrolment and orientation	7	6	2	3
Student support during service delivery	6	6	6	1
Complaints and appeals handling	3	1	1	0
Records management and graduation	5	2	5	2
Feedback mechanisms	2	4	1	4
All	23	19	15	10
*Compiled from Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of *SAEQ/SIT Student Services Benchmarking Report* (2011, April). SAE Institute/Qantm College and SIT, 32 pp. The exercise, conducted by staff from both organisations, was focused on the Bachelor of Audio Production (see also section 2.1) and the Bachelor of Digital Media.				

Although the evaluation team recognises the difficulty in establishing a causative relationship between the provision of support services and educational achievement, SIT is urged to develop indicators that determine whether these guidance and support services have a demonstrably positive impact on educational outcomes for students (see Recommendations).

1.6   How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

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

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

A significant activity in which Council and management have been involved that supports educational achievement has been the implementation of the zero-fees scheme. Investment of funds by businesses and community, coupled with an increase in class sizes, has enabled students to enrol in most programmes of the institute since 2001 without payment of tuition fees, in exchange for a commitment to satisfactory attendance and academic progress and adherence to SIT's Student Code of Conduct. This initiative has led to a growth in student numbers which, in addition to increasing educational opportunities within the region and beyond, has had an economic impact on Invercargill and Southland, through student consumption of services outside education.[33] The zero-fees scheme is one of

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[33] BERL's research shows the direct impact of spending by SIT, SIT staff, and Invercargill students on the regional economy was $69.5 million, resulting in an overall total effect on the Southland region of $118 million. This positively impacted on employment, with the

many initiatives by SIT's Council and management to engage with industry and the local community.

A strategic alliance was formed with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa to increase engagement with the Māori community and enhance programme relevance and support for Māori students. At 14 per cent, the proportion of Māori students at SIT slightly exceeds the proportion of Māori in Southland. The institute's management supports the achievement of Māori students through the activities of the Kaiwhakaruruhau Committee, Tauira Tautoko – a culturally safe social space for Māori – making facilities available on campus to selected programmes offered by Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, and providing a Māori graduation ceremony. Similarly, management initiatives, such as Pasifika open evenings and 'Computing for Free for Pacific Mothers', serve to portray the institute as accessible to a wide range of learners.

Another example of Council and management's support of educational achievement is the implementation of SIT's flexible mixed-mode delivery of courses, which supports students to staircase into on-campus programmes and provides them with flexible study options that foster success. Embedding literacy and numeracy in programmes and supporting continued professional development of staff are other ways by which Council and management support educational achievement.

SIT has proactively taken steps, as part of its self-assessment process, to raise the educational performance of its students, including retention and qualification completions (see section 1.1). Management initiated programme-specific reviews which have resulted in changes to admission procedures, discouragement from enrolment of those part-time students who have no clear intention or expectation of completing qualifications, and a recognition of the need for early engagement of learners. Engagement of learners is a persistent theme of the Committed Learners Project, an initiative driven by SIT management, the conclusions and recommendations of which[34] are being informally shared across the organisation by its authors as well as being implemented formally by the Trades and Technology Faculty.

SIT's Council and management are committed to supporting educational achievement and have implemented a range of initiatives to increase educational achievement, including through the Council's strategic plan and as a consequence of self-assessment activities either at the programme and support service level, or through organisation-wide 'focus area capability studies' and management-initiated reviews. Better knowledge of graduate destinations and outcomes and increased

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employment of an additional 734 FTEs and $56.4 million in GDP in the Southland region. From: *Community Newsletter* (2012, May). Southern Institute of Technology, p. 3.

[34] Bodkin-Allen, S., Hoffman, J., & Whittle, J. (2012, April). *Report on the Committed Learners Project.* Invercargill: SIT Research Institute, pp. 4-5.

capability of analysis of data related to programme provision and support would improve self-assessment at all management levels at SIT. That said, SIT takes a highly proactive stance towards investigating educational opportunities from proposed developments (see also section 1.2).

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Audio programmes, comprising: Certificate in Audio Production and Bachelor of Audio Production

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

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

The certificate is a bridging programme to the degree. Although it is an exit qualification, 60 per cent of the 75 per cent of students who complete the certificate are able to progress through interviews and auditions to enrolment in the degree. Staff have found a correlation between attendance in class and retention in this programme, and use this as an indicator of potential success in the degree when interviewing those who have both completed the certificate and are potential students for degree study. Thus, completion of the certificate does not guarantee acceptance into the degree. Quantitative evidence of the success of certificate students in the degree is collected by SIT, and indicates that the certificate is an appropriate introduction to degree study. In addition, anecdotal evidence from degree students who entered by that route indicated that it was an appropriate introduction to further study for them.

The degree provides a qualification that is based on the science of sound and audio production and can lead to employment in acoustics, electronics, and audiology (via further postgraduate study). Most graduates enter employment or self-employment in the recording industry – 80 per cent of the degree graduates gain employment or proceed to further study. The staff are academically well qualified and are also musicians or practitioners in the recording industry and bring that experience to bear on their teaching. They update their knowledge through their research[35], attendance and presentations at relevant conferences, staff exchanges with SAE, industry-specific software training (e.g. AVID Protocols), holding professional memberships, one-to-one mentoring from international audio engineering specialists, and attending concerts by international performers.

The programme provides value to its students – and matches their needs – by providing them with a professional audio production degree, leading to a range of employment outcomes. Students are trained and certified in the use of

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[35] The Degree Monitoring Report (2011) notes, 'Research projects undertaken by BAP [Bachelor of Audio Production] staff members include the creation of a website for sharing research and performance activities by staff and students in the School of Music and SIT Sound. BAP staff continue their various research activities, and continue to publish and contribute to the broader music and audio research culture'.

internationally accredited software. The programme includes a mandatory 12-week period of study at SAE[36] in Byron Bay, New South Wales, where students attend classes and workshops as part of one paper of the degree.[37] Successful students receive an SAE transcript as well as one from SIT. This experience was predicted by potential attendees to broaden their experience and enhance their industry networks. The value of the outcomes of the programmes to the community is in providing skilled audio-engineering practitioners who provide specialist technical advice and operational support for local, national, and international events (involving a variety of industries, e.g. music, film, television, and radio), and for the professional recording industry.

Teaching is considered good by students, and the students say feedback is prompt and helpful. Staff participate in the tutor observation scheme (see section 1.4). Student evaluations of their learning experiences are generally positive; progress is enhanced by one-to-one review meetings with each student three times during the year. Students value the peer support service, and while learning support is offered by the teaching staff, they also refer students to the institute's central support services. Although they do not receive feedback from that central service, because consultations in the Learning Assistance Unit are generally considered confidential, staff monitoring of subsequent assignments suggests that such interventions are beneficial to the students using the service.

The best features of the self-assessment of these programmes are (i) the comprehensive benchmarking exercise with SAE/Qantm, which also provides an international context for the degree; and (ii) the monitoring of graduate destinations through Facebook, in which 85 per cent of graduates accept the programme leader as a 'friend'. These two activities provide evidence of international credibility and currency of the programme and relevance to the job market.

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[36] Qantm was founded in 1996 in Australia, backed by several key universities, various government departments and arts bodies, and became a new media college with a number of locations in Australia, Europe, and Asia. Through links with key companies, Qantm College has set a benchmark in the ability to design courses to meet the needs of the relevant industries. Qantm courses always include hands-on training by experienced professionals using state of the art equipment and industry-standard practices. Qantm College was acquired by SAE Institute in 2004 and is now a part of the SAE Group, with an associated global brand.

[37] Paper BAP365 for SIT's Bachelor of Audio Production.

2.2 Focus area: Bachelor of Information Technology

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

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

This degree attracts high numbers of students (~90) including international students (who comprise 18 per cent of the EFTS), with much smaller numbers (~10) in level 5, 6, and 7 diplomas and certificates which have courses in common with the degree. Of the third-year cohort, 85 per cent completed the qualification in 2011, also gaining Microsoft and Cisco industry-accredited training appropriate for employment and experience in industry-based project work. These components of the programme prepare graduates well for industry and, together with the high qualification completion rate, justify a rating of Good for educational performance.

At the end of 2010, a formal review of the degree programme was commissioned by the chief executive to ascertain the cause of low retention rates between years 1 and 2 of the degree. Interviews with students prior to enrolment, more follow-up of students, the introduction of peer tutors, and adjustment to the first-year curriculum to enhance early student success appear to have been successful interventions. This formal programme review is part of SIT's normal self-assessment processes and was triggered by self-assessment processes at faculty level, including use of the Faculty Action Tracking Tool (which is employed to document issues, identify solutions, monitor their implementation, and follow up the success or otherwise of these activities). The effectiveness of the intervention was clear (Table 8).

Table 8. Retention from year 1 to year 2 in Bachelor of Information Technology, 2010-2011

Given year	No. of year 1 students in October of given year	No. of students in year 2 in March of following year	Retention from year 1 to year 2
2010	41	29.6	72%
2011	39.0	31.2	80%

Students considered that using software packages used in industry was of particular value to them. The advisory committee was firmly of the view that the degree programme met the needs of – and was valued by – the local computer industry, noting that students were often employed as a consequence of the relevance of the third-year project to industry clients. The programme maintains a record of graduates, and contacts graduates in the year following their graduation via an email survey, asking questions that include: (i) the work they are undertaking in the IT sector; (ii) how well the programme has prepared them for the workforce; and (iii) any changes they think would enhance the employability of degree graduates. The programme is collecting both formal and informal graduate destination data in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme in the workplace and to inform improvement of the content of the programme.

Staff are well qualified, with the degree monitor noting that 'the staff are active in research as well as studying at higher levels'.[38] The student surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching – and this was supported by student interviews. The staff use student feedback as a measure of teaching quality and as a source of improvements, but this is complemented by other indicators to measure the quality of teaching (including the Faculty Action Plan Tracking Tool, staff appraisals, and internal moderation reports). Self-assessment is developing and its implementation is indicating improvements.

2.3 Focus area: SIT2LRN with particular emphasis on: Certificate in Health Sciences (Pre-entry) (Level 3), and Certificate in Science (Intermediate) (Level 4)

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

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

General commentary

SIT2LRN delivers over 30 qualifications online to ~1,000 EFTS, ~3,400 students, 30-40 of whom are overseas – principally expatriate New Zealanders and about 20 students in a partnership with Hubei University of Education. SIT2LRN is a strategic initiative that provides introductory programmes that staircase to SIT programmes. Students wishing to enrol in some programmes offered by other providers are also referred to SIT and enrol in SIT2LRN programmes as an introduction to these providers' higher-level courses and programmes. About 100 schools nationwide are also participating in STAR training through SIT2LRN (which incidentally serves as a recruiting tool for school leavers to attend SIT).

In addition, SIT2LRN has been able to respond quickly to changes in legislation and provide programmes that meet an immediate need. An example cited by SIT was the programmes developed to meet the changed legal requirements for financial advisors and real estate salespeople. Survey results showed, and conversations with students confirmed, that students in SIT2LRN were attracted to online and distance learning because they could fit the study around employment and other commitments.

The programmes delivered online are complemented by DVDs, general 'edutainment', as well as course-specific television programmes on Southland's Cue TV, and – where necessary – printed specialist resources. SIT2LRN facilitator engagement with students is heavily focused on supporting students in their understanding of the learning materials.

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[38] Degree Monitoring Report, Bachelor of Information Technology, Southern Institute of Technology (2011, September).

The educational performance indicators across all SIT2LRN programmes are shown in Table 9.

Year		Component/course completion	Qualification completion	Progression	Retention
2010	SIT2LRN	59%	36%	44%	47%
	OP*	64%	33%	20%	30%
2011	SIT2LRN	64%	40%	42%	46%
	OP†	73%	59%	18%	30%
2012	SIT2LRN	77%‡			

Table 9. Educational performance indicators for SIR2LRN programmes, 2010-2011, compared to Open Polytechnic (OP)

* http://www.tec.govt.nz/Reports/2010/Open-Polytechnic.pdf
† http://www.tec.govt.nz/Reports/2011/Open-Polytechnic.pdf
‡Anticipated

SIT2LRN benchmarks its performance against the Open Polytechnic. In 2010, Open Polytechnic had a higher component completion but was lower on all other measures. At the time of this evaluation, it was too early for results on qualification completions, progressions, and retention for 2012; however, component completion (analogous to course completions) is currently 77 per cent across all SIT2LRN programmes, suggesting a year-on-year increase.

In the area where SIT2LRN performance was lower (in terms of course completions), evidence was presented that an improvement of 5 per cent had been achieved between 2010 and 2011, with a further 13 per cent improvement for 2012.

Health-related programmes

The evaluation was particularly concerned with the SIT2LRN programmes' role in providing effective pathways to health-related programmes at SIT (Figure 1). Students in the Certificate in Health (Pre-entry) (Level 3) SIT2LRN programme and the Certificate in Health Services (Intermediate) (Level 4) SIT2LRN programme also progress to programmes at other tertiary education providers.

SIT2LRN had responded to the removal of core health unit standards from the NZQA framework with a redevelopment of its existing health sciences programmes into local units in order to meet the needs of students, industry, and other tertiary education providers.

		Destination programmes at SIT				
		Certificate in Health Sciences (Intermediate) (Level 4) **SIT2LRN**	Certificate in Pre-Entry to Bachelor of Nursing (Level 4)	Certificate in Relaxation Massage (Level 4)	Bachelor of Nursing	Bachelor of Therapeutic and Sports Massage
Introductory programmes	Certificate in Health Sciences (Pre-Entry) (Level 3) **SIT2LRN**	●	●	●	●	●
	Certificate in Health Sciences (Intermediate) (Level 4) **SIT2LRN**		●	●	●	●
	Certificate in Pre-Entry to Bachelor of Nursing (Level 4)			●	●	●

Figure 1. Destination programmes at SIT from health-related introductory programmes, including those offered through SIT2LRN.

Participants in these programmes are typically female, of average age 35 years, and intending to return to the workforce. Although for the health-related programmes only low percentages of the enrolments in the destination programmes (principally nursing or therapeutic and sports massage) are derived from the SIT2LRN programmes, staff in the destination programmes (especially nursing, and sport and recreation) said the students were generally successful, performing generally as well as or better than direct-entry students. Sixty-three per cent of the health science pre-entry level 3 students completed the qualification and progressed to a higher qualification. Of these, 69 per cent progressed to a level 4 qualification. Fifty-one per cent of the health sciences intermediate level 4 students completed and progressed to a higher qualification. Of these, 46 per cent progressed to a level 7 (degree-level) qualification. These statistics attest to the value of these programmes to students and to the matching of their needs in attaining entry to higher qualifications. Other tertiary education providers recommend these programmes to students seeking admission to their health-related programmes. Staff teaching in the higher-level destination programmes noted the good preparedness of students in SIT2LRN health-related programmes for their particular programmes. They also commented on the value of the building of capability for self-directed study that is a feature of successful online study, including SIT2LRN, to other programmes (e.g. Bachelor of Nursing).

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The success of these programmes – and other SIT2LRN programmes – is benchmarked against other online providers, especially the Open Polytechnic (see Table 9 for an overall comparison). Staff indicate that at lower NZQF levels, SIT's qualification completion rates are comparable to other distance/online providers (~45 per cent), but SIT is aiming for comparability of achievement with equivalent non-distance/non-online programmes (typically ~75 per cent). Progress towards this seems likely, given the attention paid to welcoming students to online programmes, follow-up telephone calls and emails, a newsletter, complemented by ongoing support by programme facilitators and administrative staff – all of which was confirmed by students.

The provision of this support to learners has been derived from responses to first impressions and quarterly surveys and the application of international research into online delivery. Self-assessment of education is facilitated in the online environment because the online nature of interaction between staff and students means that student progress can be tracked and interventions provided/suggested as appropriate. SIT2LRN is particularly effective in this activity and can point to a number of initiatives and changes to practice that have resulted in improvements (e.g. (a) analysis of completions data prompted the recommendation that the earliest SIT2LRN study should be two papers undertaken on a part-time basis, with subsequent study being full-time[39]; (b) a First Impressions Survey revealed the need for a simple study plan to be provided as a starting point for students who had not responded to the recommendation to prepare one; (c) another such survey had led to the engagement of an instructional designer to enhance learning materials; and (d) a survey after the introduction of *SITUATION the magazine of the SIT2LRN Students* confirmed that it provided an encouragement to continue study).

It was clear to the evaluators that the staff who manage the SIT2LRN programmes are very familiar with the challenges faced by distance and online students and were able to cite literature related to the high withdrawal rates (i.e. leading to low retention and completion rates) typical of this learning environment, both internationally[40] and locally[41], which informed their interventions and improvements

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[39] This was clearly informed by the observation made by the TEC: 'The enrolment of part-time or extramural students can affect measured performance, as these students often have outside commitments that reduce their ability to devote themselves to their studies'. From TEC (2011). Tertiary Education Performance Report 2010, p. 10, http://www.tec.govt.nz/Documents/Publications/Tertiary-Education-Performance-Report-2010.pdf

[40] Examples include: Carr, S. (2000). As distance education comes of age, the challenge is keeping the students. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 11, 39; Nash, R. (2005). Course Completion Rates among Distance Learners: Identifying Possible Methods to Improve Retention. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, *8*(4), http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojda/winter84/nash84.html

[41] Examples include: Maathius-Smith, S.E., *et al.* (2010). Obtaining high retention and completion rates in a New Zealand ODL environment: A case study of strategies employed by Information and Library Studies faculty at The Open Polytechnic. *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning*, *15*(1), 31-45; Tyler-Smith, K (2006). Early Attrition among First Time

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to the support provided to learners, in the expectation that these would lead to enhanced educational performance.

The evaluation team considers that there is much in SIT2LRN's approach to monitoring of educational performance and the conduct and interpretation of surveys that could be shared more widely across SIT.

2.4 Focus area: Contemporary music programmes, comprising: Certificate in Pre-Entry to Music and Sound Engineering, Certificate in Intermediate Contemporary Music (Level 3), and Bachelor of Contemporary Music

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

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

The educational performance in 2009 and 2010 of these programmes is shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Educational performance in contemporary music programmes, 2009-2010						
	Retention			**Completion**		
	2009	*2010*		*2009*	*2010*	*2011*
Certificate in Intermediate Contemporary Music						
	97%	83%	70%	71%	60%	50%
Bachelor of Contemporary Music						
Year 1	95%	88%		70%	57%*	
Year 2	97%	96%		89%	73%	
Year 3	97%	100%		97%	100%	*
*The legacy of low completions in the first year of the degree programme meant that in 2011 there was a very small third year (7.9 EFTS), of whom three completed the programme.						

Issues with retention of students and completions of courses and programmes that had been identified through SIT's institutional self-assessment processes had prompted a full review of the programmes.[42] Recommendations from that review included: (a) increased attention to selection and admission of students capable of successful completion of the intermediate certificate; (b) overall improvements in admission processes to all programmes, including the prospect of reducing enrolment of part-time students who are taking papers for personal interest and have no intention of completing the programme; (c) development of processes to

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eLearners: A Review of Factors that Contribute to Drop-out, Withdrawal and Non-completion Rates of Adult Learners undertaking eLearning Programmes. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, *2*(2), http://jolt.merlot.org/Vol2_No2_TylerSmith.htm

[42] *Music School Review* (2011 August 31). Southern Institute of Technology.

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monitor attendance; and (d) improved processes for supporting student achievement.

Implementation of the recommendations of the review was clearly evident to the evaluation team. For example, staff and students commented on the application of new admission processes, one-to-one interviews during the year to monitor student progress, and earlier referral to learning support services. These interventions appear to have reduced the number of withdrawals and thereby enhanced retention, although it was too early in 2012 to be certain whether this would be sustained. Staff considered that the introduction of Friday performances in response to earlier student feedback was also a contributing factor in improving retention. Student comments were generally positive about the quality of teaching (and this is supported by the student satisfaction survey), although they were unaware of any changes that occurred to the programme as a consequence of their feedback.

Further study or employment as performers or practitioners either in the local, national, or international music industry, or as music teachers, are the main outcomes from the degree. Many graduates undertake the Graduate Diploma in Teaching through the University of Otago in order to become secondary school teachers. For the pre-entry certificate and intermediate students, the majority of students progress to higher study.

Improvements have been made to the programmes as a consequence of analysis of graduate destination data and the reasons given by students for withdrawal. For example, the identification that teaching is a common career path for graduates prompted the addition of a music education strand to the degree in 2012. Staff are actively engaged in research; all staff have research plans that relate to their teaching in the degree. There is clear support from the faculty for research, including time allocated for research through abatement of teaching hours, and provision for attendance at conferences.

Many students have developed their skills to a level at which they can perform in professional bands, or at various festivals or events. Music staff perform regularly for students, which was a direct result of feedback from students that they would like to see staff perform. Staff also advised of collaborative activities between contemporary music and audio production that involved both staff and students:

- Daily ensemble rehearsals where music students practise their performance for the Friday concert at SIT Sound, and audio production students provide the sound mixing

- Friday concerts at Centrestage with music students performing and audio production students providing sound mixing and lighting

- Singer-songwriter students using audio engineers for their recording assignment

- Third-year audio production students using music students for the EP recording assignment

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- Audio students used to provide live sound for third-year music students' half-hour concert assessment.

In terms of resources for students and staff, the evaluation team was informed that the SIT Music School has a large array of quality practising equipment, housed in sound-proofed rooms, along with six acoustic pianos, including a baby grand piano. For weekly assessment concerts, students use Centrestage, a 300-seat theatre given to SIT by the Southland community, featuring state-of-the-art public address equipment, amplification for guitars and basses, a drum kit, and two electronic keyboards. The auditorium has a digital projector and screen, full theatre lighting, and surround sound. Students also have access to a full set of equipment for touring and/or off-site performances. The SIT Music School also hosts a number of national and international guest lecturers on a regular basis. These guest lecturers provide workshops and deliver performances to staff and students.

2.5 Focus area: Automotive programmes, comprising Certificate in Automotive Engineering (Light) offered in Invercargill, and Certificate in Automotive Engineering offered in Christchurch

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

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

These programmes are provided by SIT as a response to a demand for industry qualifications at these levels in Southland and Canterbury. Specifically, the *Southland Labour Market and Economic Profile*[43] noted that the greatest demand in Southland in 2010 was for qualifications at levels 1-3, with about 45 per cent of all positions requiring these levels of qualification. Similarly, the *Canterbury Labour Market and Economic Profile*[44] stated that 41 per cent of all positions required qualifications at these levels. The programmes are thus highly relevant and valued by employers and learners, and SIT has a very good understanding of the needs of industry and local business in this area.

In both programmes, student educational success, as revealed by programme retention and completion data, is modest, with significant numbers of student withdrawals, but can still lead to employment or apprenticeships (Table 11).

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[43] *2011 Labour and Economic Profile Southland* (2012, June). Infometrics, p. 6.

[44] *2011 Labour and Economic Profile Canterbury* (2012, June). Infometrics, p. 4.

Table 11. Educational performance and graduate destinations of automotive programmes offered in Invercargill and Christchurch, 2011				
	Certificate in Automotive Engineering (Light) (Invercargill)		Certificate in Automotive Engineering (Christchurch)	
	No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*
No. of students	35		93	
Educational achievement				
Retention	23	66%	63	68%
Qualification completions	16	46%	45	48%
Withdrawals to apprenticeships	3	9%	Anecdotal evidence only†	
Other withdrawals	9	26%		
Graduate destinations❶				
Apprenticeship	13	37%*	3	
Employment within automotive industry	4	11%*	25	75%*
Other employment	6	17%*	7	7%*
Total employment or apprenticeship	23	66%*	33	82%*
Further study			5	12%*
❶Separate graduation destination surveys conducted in Christchurch and Invercargill.				
*Percentage of responses received †The 2011 Canterbury earthquakes in Christchurch prevented more systematic collection and collation of student withdrawal data.				

The 2011 graduate survey of students who completed the 2011 courses in automotive engineering and were employed showed that 73 per cent considered that their work was highly related to the programme, and that 82 per cent considered that their programme was helpful or very helpful in gaining employment.

There is evidence of valued outcomes for the ~50 per cent of learners who do not complete the programmes, in that they may still acquire basic skills and knowledge, enhanced literacy and numeracy, and work-readiness – setting them on a pathway to later possible employment or apprenticeship. The programme is not open-entry and does have academic restrictions to ensure that students are capable of meeting the programme requirements and progressing on to an apprenticeship in the industry. In addition, all students are interviewed and undertake a literacy/numeracy test to gauge their level prior to being accepted on to the programme.

The offering of different automotive programmes in Christchurch and Invercargill reflects the differing needs of those cities, as articulated by the advisory committees. As an example, work experience is a compulsory component of the programme in Invercargill, but is no longer compulsory (although still considered

important) in Christchurch. There are also differences in the approaches to teaching and learner support. Managers at faculty and programme level see value in closer relationships between the two sites, which would give greater consistency of programme design and delivery through tutor exchanges and cross-moderation. There has been significant investment in developing facilities at both sites.

Self-assessment practice is developing at both sites, particularly in respect to teaching practice, but there is currently little interpretation of analysis leading to improvements. Programme management recognises the potential use of the findings of the Committed Learners Project to enhance delivery and achievement in these programmes. As a consequence, 1.5 FTE learning and student support staff have been added at Christchurch, which has provided assistance in meeting a range of learning needs (including one-to-one literacy and numeracy tuition) and assistance with more personal issues (e.g. budgeting). Students are self-referring or being referred to this service, and this development is reported by staff as being more satisfactory than accessing such support from Invercargill.

2.6 Focus area: Business Administration and Computing, comprising Certificate in Business Administration and Computing (Level 2), National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing (Level 3), and National Certificate in Computing (Level 3), offered in Invercargill and Gore

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

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

These programmes meet a need identified by the advisory committees and other community stakeholders for business skills in both Invercargill and Gore. Students also valued the programmes as a means of gaining skills for entering or re-entering the workforce. The rate of qualification completions in these programmes has historically been low, as participants have enrolled on a part-time basis into particular courses to meet an immediate employment or educational need (i.e. 'just-in-time' study); this is particularly noticeable in Invercargill (Table 12).

Table 12. Educational performance and graduate destinations for business administration and computing programmes offered in Invercargill and Gore, 2011

	Invercargill		Gore	
	No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*
No. of students	65		49	
Educational performance				
Retention	45	69%	43	88%
Qualification completions	18	28%	23	6%
Graduate destinations				
Employment (incl. own business)	13	36%*		55%*
Engagement in further study	18	50%*		30%*
*Percentage of responses received				

However, in order to improve educational performance for students in these programmes, strict application and selection criteria (including attendance at an interview and assessment of literacy and numeracy prior to acceptance into the programme) have been introduced that may mean that part-time enrolment is discouraged. This has meant that in 2012, the qualification completion rate for programmes offered in Invercargill has increased from about 50 per cent in 2011 to 66 per cent (for level 3 programmes) and to 89 per cent (for level 4 programmes). While it might be inferred that a consequence of this change from 'just-in-time' study to a focus on qualification completions may be that industry and student needs may be less well matched, SIT assured the evaluation team that it continues to maintain its relationships with key stakeholders, including industry, who support SIT's moves to improve the delivery of programmes in this focus area.

The student satisfaction with teaching is good; the quality of teaching is assessed through student evaluations and tutor observations, and this contributes to staff appraisals and self-assessment of the programme. Pre-moderated assessments and learning materials for the unit standards used in the programmes are purchased from a commercial supplier for use at both Invercargill and Gore, but only in Gore are these currently accompanied by locally developed teaching manuals. Akin to the automotive programmes (see section 2.5), greater consistency between sites is likely to be beneficial to students and staff.

There is active engagement by staff in professional development, e.g. undertaking study for a teaching qualification such as the National Certificate in Adult Education and Training, and higher qualifications.

The academic support needed by students is initially assessed using the national literacy/numeracy assessment tool, and provided during the programmes by tutors or referral to centralised support services. Again, there is little evidence of systematic self-assessment of the effectiveness of responses to student needs at the programme level.

2.7 Focus area: Student learning support

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

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

Student learning support services at SIT are provided both at faculty level and through central services. Tutorial staff provide students with assistance where necessary. In the case of the Bachelor of Information Technology and all other diploma and degree-level programmes with significant numbers of international students, the international students are provided with additional timetabled tutorial assistance on a weekly basis. SIT also provides both international and domestic students with access to a peer tutoring scheme, in which high-achieving or demonstrably capable students are paid by SIT to support students who are encountering difficulties with their programme.

Additional support is provided to Māori students through Tauira Tautoko, the Māori liaison officer, and support services provided as a result of a partnership with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

Guidance and support for learners within faculties is augmented and supported by the Learning Assistance Unit. Students may recognise for themselves that they need the assistance of the unit, or they can be referred by academic staff; students were well informed about the availability of these services. The unit provides individual assistance and workshops for students, including through drop-in sessions and one-to-one appointments. In addition, the unit provides course-specific workshops, generic workshops, small group sessions, and assistance with academic reading and writing and research methodologies. The unit also provides assistance to tutors, and endeavours to help them develop the quality and effectiveness of their teaching.

Effectiveness of the services provided by the unit to students is largely determined from a student satisfaction survey. Although the number of students participating in a survey of the effectiveness of the Learning Assistance Unit was small (20), 75 per cent indicated that learning assistance sessions influenced their continuation in their course of study, and 90 per cent would recommend the unit's services to others. While some academic programmes identify an improvement in individual assessments after students have accessed the services provided by the unit, there is limited analysis by the unit of the impact on educational achievement of any interventions made by its staff.

The effectiveness of student learning support across the institute is considered on the basis of the SIT-wide student evaluation, and in 2011 students rated learning support highly. An international perspective on student support is provided by the benchmarking exercise with SAE/Qantm in respect of the Bachelor of Audio Production degree (see section 2.1).

Focus area: Achievement and support of international students

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

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

Since 2008, SIT has experienced significant growth in its international student population. This growth is expected to continue, and SIT's self-assessment processes have identified a range of activities that need to be undertaken in order to sustain and support the increased international student numbers at SIT.

SIT recognises that the projected increase in the number of international students requires the implementation of a more systematic process to track student progress. Management is intending to achieve this through better use of the student information management system and development of a comprehensive operations manual, partly as a result of a self-assessment of the management of service delivery, human resource management, and financial management and general administration. Evidence was provided to the evaluation team of actions identified to further enhance the student experience and streamline administrative processes relevant to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, with which SIT is compliant.

International students have access to the full range of student services normally provided and are generally achieving well, with higher levels of retention and completion than domestic students (Table 13).

Table 13. Comparison of retention and course completion for international and domestic students				
		2009	**2010**	**2011**
Retention	International	67.1%	67.9%	87.8%
	International excluding English language students	45.2%	53.0%	67.2%
	Domestic❶	38%	39%	38%
Course completion	International	78.6%	82.1%	83.8%
	International excluding English language students	74.9%	81.9%	87.0%
	Domestic❶	66%	65%	70.6%
❶ From Table 2				

Through its self-assessment processes, SIT has identified that the movement of students from its English Language Institute to mainstream programmes required adaptation to encourage a more seamless transition for those students. The changes implemented are being closely monitored, with initial indications of a positive effect.

SIT international staff have developed close working relationships with academic staff to support international student retention and achievement. Following recommendations identified through self-assessment, SIT international staff separately monitor the achievement and retention rates of international students, in addition to that undertaken in faculties.

SIT offers personalised support services to international students, aided by the effective utilisation of its student management system which allows for academic and pastoral care trends and developments to be tracked.

SIT has also developed a range of unique support services and structures for international students in response to identified key student needs. This has helped international students better orientate and integrate themselves into the SIT and wider communities. In particular, SIT works closely with community groups (e.g. Venture Southland[45] and local migrant settlement groups) to enlist support in making international students feel 'at home' in Southland, a region which is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse.[46] In addition, SIT works to align its international student strategy with the needs of the community and local industry and this is primarily achieved through Education Southland[47], a strategic organisation that promotes, researches, and facilitates international education in Southland.

SIT annually reviews and reports on its obligations under the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students and has proactively sought training to ensure best practice compliance with the code.

2.9   Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

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

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

See section 1.6 for details.

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[45] Venture Southland is a joint initiative of the Invercargill City Council, Southland District Council, and Gore District Council, which delivers enterprise, tourism, promotion, events, and community development services to the region (http://www.southlandnz.com).

[46] Post-2006 estimates suggest that there are over 135 nationalities now present in the Southland region (includes Invercargill and Gore). These include around 3,000 Pasifika people, over 1,000 Filipinos, over 200 Chileans, and a similar number of Brazilians and Chinese, and around 100 Koreans. In addition there is a strong Dutch community and growing numbers of people from the African continent. From: *Southland District Council Inclusive Communities Strategy*, http://www.southlanddc.govt.nz/assets/PDFS/Inclusive%20Communities%20Strategy.pdf

[47] http://www.southlandnz.com/Live-in-Southland/Education/International-Students

Recommendations

In addition to any recommendations implied or expressed within the report, NZQA recommends that Southland Institute of Technology:

- Strengthen the comparison of educational performance and capability in self-assessment of academic programmes by concentrating the focus of self-assessment at the programme and service level, and limiting the use of sampling to a level required to undertake validation and moderation of this self-assessment work. As a specific example, the same evaluative criteria should be used for all programmes.

- Develop a means by which the effectiveness of learning support provided to students can be measured in terms of educational achievement.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

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).

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/keydocs/index.html.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz