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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Freedom Institute of Higher Education
Limited trading as FREEDOM Institute
of Higher Education

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 28 April 2016

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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:	Freedom Institute of Higher Education Limited trading as FREEDOM Institute of Higher Education
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	18 July 2014
Location:	Registry: 1/28 Liverpool Street, Hamilton Central
Delivery sites:	1-160 Victoria Street, Hamilton (currently undergoing renovation); 76-78 Manners Street, Wellington
Courses currently delivered:	Diploma in Educational Facilitation (Advanced) (Level 7), 120 credits; Advanced Retail Management (Level 7)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: three equivalent full-time students
Number of staff:	Two full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate in Governance (Level 7)• New Zealand Diploma in Business (Accounting, Management and Leadership) (Level 5)• New Zealand Diploma in Business (Accounting, Management and Leadership) (Level 6)• Advanced Retail Management (Level 7)• Advanced Project and Team Management (Level 7)• Advanced Business Productivity - Sustainability

(Level 7)

- Diploma in Health (Advanced) (Applied Management) (Level 7)
- Diploma in Educational Facilitation (Advanced) (Level 7)
- Curriculum Design and Academic Leadership (Level 7)
- Certificates in New Zealand Studies (Levels 1-3)
- Rugby and Adventure Education (Levels 1-3)

Distinctive characteristics: Freedom Institute is a family business with four members of the family in governance and/or management roles. Freedom Institute was established in response to an identified need and perceived gap in the market for an organisation that provided practice-based, higher-level education for professionals in business, health, higher education and social sciences.

Freedom Institute is accredited to deliver many programmes designed by the New Zealand Curriculum Design Institute, a company that specialises in programme design.

Freedom Institute's philosophy is to be 'agents of change'; to add value to learners so that they can be empowered to 'make a difference' in their own lives and that of their communities.

This is the first external evaluation and review (EER) of Freedom Institute of Higher Education since its registration in 2014.

Recent significant changes: A new research manager has been appointed in 2016.

Other: Freedom Institute currently has nine students at the Wellington campus completing the Advanced Retail Management programme. These students were previously studying with a category 4 provider. The students are due to complete in 2016. A tutor travels from Hamilton to Wellington fortnightly to tutor the students.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Focus areas selected were the Diploma in Educational Facilitation (Advanced) (Level 7) (120 credits); and research capacity, capability and authenticity. The diploma was selected as it is the only programme with graduates. Research was selected, at the request of Freedom Institute, to gain a better understanding of the relationship between Freedom Institute, the New Zealand Curriculum Design Institute and the International Higher Education Curriculum Design and Academic Leadership Society (IHECDALS).

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.

Two evaluators visited the Hamilton registry site over two days. They met with three of the four members of the board of directors, the two presidents (also directors), the learner services manager, a tutor and the newly appointed research manager. A wide range of documentation was viewed, including the yearly self-assessment and evaluation reports, meeting minutes of the staff, management and board, learner feedback, moderation results, the research plan and conference presentations. An IT contract worker showed the evaluators the online management system being developed, including the recording of learner results and attendance records. Post-visit, the lead evaluator spoke by phone with the two graduates of the Diploma in Educational Facilitation and a range of external stakeholders, including advisory board members and academics who have contributed to the development of a number of Freedom Institute's programmes.

Summary of Results

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

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance and in the capability in self-assessment of **Freedom Institute of Higher Education Limited, trading as FREEDOM Institute of Higher Education** for the following reasons:

- Staff have a shared commitment to philosophical, ethical and educational beliefs and practices that are learner-centred, culturally inclusive and professionally oriented. These serve as guidelines and challenges on a daily basis.
- Tutors are well qualified, experienced and passionate about the values and approach at the institute. They use a facilitative, inclusive approach which encourages collaboration with other learners, thereby enhancing the learning experience.
- Learners were able to apply their learning in their workplaces in a timely manner. This practice both consolidated and informed the theory learnt in class. Assessment was valid and used to provide learners and tutors with feedback on progress.
- Teaching and learning is informed by credible research. This research has an external focus and includes staff participation at conferences and contributions to peer-reviewed journals. It also informs local programme development. It is further strengthened by the recent appointment of a well-qualified, experienced research manager, to coordinate and support staff research.
- Feedback from learners, members of an external advisory committee, research collaborators and community stakeholders is encouraged and used to improve all aspects of the business.
- While learner numbers are currently small, the organisation has invested significantly in developing an online continuous improvement institute management system (CIIMS), as well as teaching and learning resources and research capability to accommodate growth in learner numbers.
- Self-assessment is ongoing and authentic. The organisation has well-developed processes and practices and a proactive approach. These processes and practices have been developed, ahead of time, to accommodate planned significant growth in learner numbers.
- The current very limited uptake of the scope of active accreditation, evidenced by the two graduates, means that the magnitude or range of outcomes is not sufficient to justify a rating of highly confident. The institute has still to demonstrate that established self-assessment activities will be fit for purpose

once learner numbers grow. For these reasons, NZQA is confident in the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of Freedom Institute.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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**.

Both graduates of the Diploma in Educational Facilitation completed in 2014 and received merit passes. These learners had already completed 50 per cent of their qualification at another PTE and had these papers cross-credited. However, they indicated that they worked hard and that the standard expected at both PTEs was high. Their results at Freedom Institute were internally and externally moderated, indicating that they were fair and valid.

Currently, there is a manual, but very efficient, tracking system for recording individual learner assessments and final results. Although learner numbers are small at present, Freedom Institute has invested in developing an online continuous improvement institute management system (CIIMS), including hiring an IT person on contract to assist with this and other IT issues. This future-proofing is good preparation for the predicted growth in learner numbers and an example of good self-assessment in practice.

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**.

Programmes maintain relevance to stakeholders as they are consulted regularly. The advisory committee meets formally twice a year and provides ongoing informal input into Freedom Institute's programme reviews. Learners' feedback is responded to, for example moving a mid-week class to a Saturday morning block class.

One graduate from the Diploma in Educational Facilitation reported that they were able to relate the theoretical learning in class to their workplace. The other is not currently employed. However, both graduates described developing greater awareness of the impact of their interactions with others and that this awareness made them more effective communicators.

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

Freedom Institute has assembled a range of external stakeholders who willingly contribute to the organisation. However, the organisation is still in the establishment phase of its development; therefore, longer-term outcomes of value are unable to be reliably evaluated at this time.

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 **Good**.

Learners are interviewed prior to enrolment to ensure they understand the requirements of the programme. Learners come from diverse backgrounds and the tutor works with them to design an individual learner pathway.

Freedom Institute currently has nine international students at the Wellington campus completing the Advanced Retail Management programme. These learners completed earlier parts of this qualification at a different PTE and were required to transfer to Freedom Institute as a result of Immigration New Zealand's policy of not issuing student visas for enrolment with a category 4 provider. Freedom Institute met the needs of these learners by opening a delivery site in Wellington (at the location of the category 4 PTE), providing a seamless transfer for the learners to their second year of studies. These learners indicated that the quality of the teaching and learning at Freedom Institute was significantly better than at their previous provider. All learners have workplace placements, and employers noted that they were well prepared and motivated.

Freedom Institute researched the market before establishing its programmes. This research included external and scholarly input. The PTE has sound mechanisms in place to ensure ongoing programmes and activities align well with significant stakeholders' needs.

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**.

Learners rated the teaching and learning as relevant, well delivered, and challenging. They also rated the quality of the tutors highly. Tutors used a facilitative, inclusive approach that encouraged collaboration with other learners, thereby enhancing the learning experience. Learners were able to apply their learning in their workplaces in a timely manner. This both consolidated and informed the theory learnt in class and provided information to discuss in class.

Internal moderation occurs regularly, with two of eight papers moderated internally each year. External moderation occurs through the New Zealand Curriculum Design Institute, which includes a separate external input. Assessment is valid and used to provide learners and tutors with feedback on progress. Tutors are well qualified, engaged in research and are experienced practitioners. All faculty are required to complete an appropriate educational facilitation programme as soon as possible post-appointment.

The recent appointment of a research manager is testament to the central role of applied research in an organisation offering higher-level qualifications. The research plan outcomes inform Freedom Institute programmes and the programme data provides information to use for applied research. Evidence provided also showed that Freedom Institute staff have contributed to scholarly debate. Academic activities are balanced by staff involvement in community issues, such as debates around drugs and euthanasia. This role as ‘the critic and conscience of society’ is taken very seriously and underpins all Freedom Institute’s activities.

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**.

Learners are supported academically, personally and with preparation for work. For example, a Work Find Programme provides six free sessions and occurs regularly. Career goals are discussed and developed at enrolment and there is ongoing review of these goals. Learners are offered support around English language if needed. Freedom Institute has close links to the local Hamilton community and connects learners to the relevant ethnic, church or community groups.

The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students is understood by staff and reviewed regularly. Freedom Institute has a team of international agents who are beginning to refer learners. Māori/Pasifika scholarships are available; only one of the former have been allocated at this stage. Staff respond promptly to learner queries. Learners are required to sign in twice a day, and 90 per cent attendance is required. Absences are followed up after one day of missed attendance. There is a learner newsletter which covers topical issues such as water safety and driving in New Zealand conditions.

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**.

Freedom Institute is a family business with a professional approach to education. Family members are represented at both board and governance levels of the organisation. There are regular formal meetings – for example, management meets every two weeks. Because of the small size of the current business, staff interact often, including informally on a day-to-day level.

While learner numbers are currently small, the organisation has invested in developing an online continuous improvement institute management system (CIIMS), as well as teaching and learning resources and research capability to accommodate growth in student numbers. This includes a comprehensive, easy to understand quality management system, regular staff, board and advisory committee meetings, and comprehensive documentation of processes and practices required for a well-run PTE.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: Diploma in Educational Facilitation (Advanced) (Level 7) (120 credits)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Research

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

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

Recommendations

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

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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