

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Study Group NZ Limited trading as
Taylors College and Embassy CES

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 2 September 2015

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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

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| Name of TEO: | Study Group NZ Limited trading as Taylors College (Taylors) and Embassy CES (Embassy) |
| Type: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| First registered: | 8 December 2001 |
| Location: | 75 Karangahape Road, Auckland City |
| Delivery sites: | As above |
| Courses currently delivered: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taylors Auckland Foundation Year (Foundation)• English Language Preparation programme• General English (beginner, pre-intermediate to advanced) |
| Code of Practice signatory: | Yes |
| Number of students: | Domestic: six International: 580 approximately at the time of the external evaluation and review (EER) visit. 454 enrolled in the Foundation Year programme; 46 in the English Language Programme; and 80 enrolled in General English courses. Foundation Year students mostly come from China to study at Taylors with a view to going on to higher education. The General English students mainly come from Colombia, Japan, Korea and Thailand, with a small number of students from Switzerland, China, Hong |

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| | Kong, Uzbekistan and Mexico. |
| Number of staff: | 59 full-time equivalents |
| Scope of active accreditation: | <p>Taylor's is approved to deliver the following programmes and training schemes listed on NZQA's website at:</p> <p>http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/course-accreditations.do?providerId=745933001&delSiteId=0</p> |
| Distinctive characteristics: | <p>Taylor's College in Auckland is part of a larger international organisation called Study Group, registered in New Zealand as Study Group NZ Ltd but trading as Taylor's College and Embassy CES on a shared site. Study Group's Australia/New Zealand division headquarters is in Sydney, Australia. The organisation has a total of 18 centres worldwide (United Kingdom, six; United States, six; Australia, four; Canada, one; and New Zealand, one). Students are able to transfer between campuses.</p> <p>Taylor's provides a Study Group-developed and university-approved programme for international students wanting to prepare for university study in New Zealand or overseas. This programme is an approved pathway into the University of Auckland, Massey University, and Auckland University of Technology, and can be used to apply for entry into other universities in New Zealand and Australia.</p> <p>The Embassy programmes come under Study Group's Australia/NZ Division; however, Embassy's global headquarters are in New York, USA.</p> |
| Previous quality assurance history: | The previous EER outcome conducted in 2011 was Highly Confident in both the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment. |

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER, selected in consultation with the PTE, consisted of the mandatory focus on governance, management and strategy and two of the programmes offered, which were:

- Taylors Auckland Foundation Year (Foundation)

This programme includes academic subjects such as biology, physics, English, Art History and Geography, to help international students, who mostly come from China, to meet university entrance requirements in New Zealand and Australia.

- Embassy General English (pre-intermediate to advanced)

This is a General English course designed to help learners to improve their confidence in speaking, comprehension and writing.

These programmes were selected as, together, they had the most students enrolled and covered the training delivered across the two organisations managed by Study Group NZ Ltd.

The remaining programme, English Language Preparation, is for students wanting additional formal English language training to gain entry to the Taylors Auckland Foundation Year.

These programmes are in transition as Taylors moves towards the newly approved and listed New Zealand Qualifications, as a result of the Targeted Review of Qualifications.

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 EER team included a lead evaluator and two team evaluators who carried out the enquiry on site at the organisation's premises over two and a half days. The team consulted with the leadership team, consisting of the head of the college, both directors of studies, the marketing manager, student counsellor, administration manager and student welfare manager, to help understand the organisation's educational performance and systems to manage self-assessment. The EER team also spoke to the senior management team based in Sydney via teleconference. The Taylors team, which included the general manager for all of Australia and New Zealand, the operations manager and the qualifications manager, provided details on the international vision and purpose, and also provided feedback on the college's educational performance.

Final Report

Further evidence was gathered from conversations with key stakeholders, including students and graduates of the Foundation programmes selected as focus areas, tutors from across the teaching departments, university representatives, international recruitment agents, and a homestay provider.

Documents were reviewed to support the organisation's self-assessment summary of key performance measures and achievement. The supporting evidential documents included programme reviews, staff self-reviews, students evaluations and organisational meeting minutes.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Study Group NZ Limited trading as Taylors College and Embassy CES**.

This rating is supported by the following evidence:

- High numbers of graduates from the Foundation Year programme gaining entry into university courses (96 per cent in 2014).
- One hundred per cent of students enrolled in English language courses attending for eight weeks or more improving their level of English, evidenced by initial testing results, five-weekly reports and exit testing results.
- Guaranteed acceptance into Taylors' partner universities in Auckland for Foundation graduates who complete the required number of Foundation course subjects, as well as opportunities to enrol in universities elsewhere in New Zealand and Australia.
- Programmes have been developed to meet the ever-changing needs of students and other stakeholders, including NZQA, Universities New Zealand, and parents.
- Well-qualified teachers who are passionate about teaching, and are well supported in their roles with highly suitable, up-to-date resources and training.
- Support systems have minimised attrition rates and contribute to higher completion rates.
- Homestay arrangements are well organised and effective in ensuring students' safety and welfare.
- Staff are valued and the centralised systems benefit Taylors' staff with sharing of resources and input into programme activities. This is strengthened by the clear business planning and communication from head office.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Study Group NZ Limited trading as Taylors College and Embassy CES**.

This rating is supported by the following evidence:

- Key performance measures are known throughout the organisation and are monitored using multiple formal and informal systems. The key performance indicators are used for internal comparison between cohorts, as well as Study Group's 18 other campuses internationally.
- Information is used to drive initiatives, which are successful in improving student achievement, as well as the learning and social experience of students. These include a revised tutor mentor system, English remedial classes, tougher attendance rules and introduction of local activities into both programmes.
- Overall, the international organisation has a culture of continuous improvement, is forward-looking, and has introduced a new student survey tool to capture feedback and results from its campuses on a continuous basis, rather than as a snapshot at a given point in time.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

The organisation's internal reports show that students are achieving well across all programmes. Articulation from the Foundation programme into New Zealand universities, as well as attendance and withdrawal (attrition) rates show improving performance. For example, articulation rates have increased from 92 per cent in 2011 to 96 per cent in 2014.

Tutors use daily records and weekly reports to monitor attendance and academic results, which are then reported to the head of the college by the Foundation director of studies. The head of the college reviews results and submits fortnightly reports to the operations manager of Study Group, based in Sydney. The routine monitoring enables the organisation to identify any trends and to plan actions to improve.

The improved attrition rates are an example of the success in monitoring results to identify trends for improvement. The organisation implemented a number of actions in response to the higher withdrawal rates identified in 2014 (9 per cent). As a result, the organisation introduced a system whereby tutors report attendance earlier for immediate follow-up. In addition, more stringent attendance targets were set by management, and the introduction of mentor tutors and remedial English classes has led to withdrawal rates at around 3 per cent, which is below Study Group's key performance indicator and the lowest rate of all the Taylor study groups internationally. Although the completion rates do not include withdrawn students because of the low withdrawal rate, the organisation can identify any downwards trends within its reporting mechanisms.

Taylor's also monitors performance measures for each cohort of the Foundation programme, and these results show that there is comparable, consistent graduate progression to higher studies across the different intakes.

Similar monitoring methods are applied for students enrolled in Embassy's General English classes. The comparison of language test scores at enrolment and exit shows that 100 per cent of students enrolled in a course for eight weeks or more advance at least one step. This is dependent on the length of enrolment, which is dictated by the student themselves. Typically, students stay with Embassy

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

language courses for 12 weeks, during which time the evidence shows worthwhile improvements.

The key demonstrable success for students is the increased confidence in using English, drawn from the exit videos and student evaluations.

Benchmarking across the global organisation is used to measure how well Auckland campus performs in relation to specific targets for all programmes, and analysis shows the Auckland campus has consistently been above all campuses each year for all measures.

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 **Excellent**.

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

Taylor's is a trusted organisation by students who want to complete the Foundation programme to gain entry into New Zealand universities. Articulation rates show the programme acts as an effective transition from a foreign education system into a New Zealand university. Graduates are guaranteed acceptance into courses with Taylor's' partnership universities, Auckland University of Technology, University of Auckland, and Massey University. The Foundation programme is also recognised by other universities in New Zealand and Australia.

The students at Taylor's develop their critical thinking and become independent learners while also improving their English language. The EER team heard from the three main university partners (above) that the Foundation course is valued because it equips the students well with independence and an awareness of what studying at a New Zealand university is like. It also makes a difference to achievement, with Taylor's' graduates requiring less pastoral care than those who come from high school programmes. The results provided by one university showed that all 30 graduates enrolled in 2014 were achieving very good grade point averages in their studies. Taylor's' university partners are clearly benefiting from students' engagement and completion of the Foundation programme, and as such unreservedly recommend the college and programme.

Students completing English language courses increase their confidence in speaking and listening skills for travel or professional reasons. The graduate outcomes show that students return to their home countries to continue in their work or other studies. Some students attend courses to improve promotion prospects, and the graduate monitoring provides evidence of the success these students had with their careers. The mix of nationalities means students are able to interact and practise English speaking, contributing to the success rate. An additional benefit is that students can transfer to other campuses because Taylor's is part of an international organisation, although very few take this opportunity.

The senior management team noted that the global organisational structure also offers value for money, as many of the core functions work on a more efficient economy of scale, providing more resources and ensuring programmes are aligned with New Zealand and international standards.

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 **Excellent**.

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

There is a clear understanding by Taylors of the needs of its stakeholders to continue to ensure that the programmes and activities are fit for purpose. The Foundation students' need for a programme pathway that enables them to enrol in New Zealand universities is being met significantly. Students have guaranteed entry to University of Auckland courses if they pass five of the subjects they choose to do at Taylors. Acceptance into other universities requires a minimum of four subject passes.

Taylors has added geography, practical art and classical studies to the programme alongside the traditional subjects (e.g. statistics, calculus, physics, English and biology) in response to student feedback for more arts options. The curriculum has been developed in conjunction with the partnered universities and is closely moderated by staff from the University of Auckland to ensure it continues to meet the requirements set up by the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee (now Universities New Zealand).

There is a range of reliable evidence to demonstrate that the organisation listens to the needs of its students, graduates and agents and other stakeholders in order to deliver a programme that meets a range of needs. This includes incorporating feedback on an ongoing basis on the subjects students require to enter into specific courses at universities, and the activities students would like.

Taylors' international management team makes decisions on the programme but allows for local context to drive the curriculum activities that enable the tutors to be responsive to the needs of students studying in New Zealand. For example, Foundation students take trips to the winter gardens and the zoo to support their learning in relation to the topics they study. The Embassy English teachers introduced a new extension class called 'Bringing English to Life' to help students practise their English during weekly activities outside the classroom, which the organisation intends to integrate into the programmes for greater uptake by students. Student feedback supports the need for this activity in helping them gain confidence in using the language.

Embassy General English students enrol for various reasons. Many want to improve their English to do some travel or to help with their career or studies in their home country. Currently, the organisation does not record information on students' aims at enrolment. A test is taken to assess the students' level of English

and ongoing interactions during and after courses and at the exit interview, and is used to gauge language progression. Tutors share resources and practices with other campuses, and the resources are reviewed every three years. An addition of New Zealand-related classroom activities and exercises could be incorporated to bring relevance to the programme as identified from a global Taylors student survey, especially to meet the need of the number of students who are on a working holiday in New Zealand.

Taylors has a range of library resources for all students to use. A comprehensive orientation programme is run, including information about referencing and plagiarism. The students were complimentary about the library and the helpfulness of staff.

All staff contribute to the formal organisation programme review, which is managed by the applicable manager in Australia (Embassy manager and the Taylors qualifications manager). Taylors' staff also have good mechanisms in place to identify ongoing needs and to put in place initiatives in response. These mechanisms include fortnightly conversations between the head of college and director of studies, and communication with the management team member in Sydney. An example of an identification of needs is the introduction of interactive whiteboards in all classrooms to help tutors, who have been trained in their use, to engage their students and access up-to-date information. Initiatives are identified from programme reviews as well as student feedback and achievement.

The head of college was involved in the national sector-wide review of the Foundation course and the development of the General English training scheme. As a result of the NZQA-led Targeted Review of Qualifications, the organisation recognises that the changes will require a new way of thinking and a lot of work to ensure that the Foundation qualification continues to align with university needs. The EER team is satisfied that the organisation will respond appropriately to ensure needs continue to be met, based on previous successful initiatives.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

To maintain the high standard of teaching, Taylors has a policy of employing people with subject expertise and a range of backgrounds to enhance the student-tutor relationships and promote learning. English language tutors are required to hold a Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) and Foundation tutors require a Bachelor's degree in the subject they are teaching.

All staff stated that they were well resourced to do their job by management and that the organisation supported them in their roles. Staff are encouraged to partake in formal professional development externally, and attend the annual Study Group conferences, as well as present at fortnightly staff meetings about their work to

encourage best practice and share ideas. Staff receive training on new technology, and the intranet also promotes sharing of resources among staff across all campuses.

Student satisfaction ratings on tutors, facilities and support for all global campuses shows that Auckland has the highest ratings at nearly 98 per cent (2014), above the next most satisfied campus (Sydney) at 90 per cent. Students were positive about the learning management system, which assists them with their learning by making formative assessments and study resources available online, as well as from the library.

Plagiarism prevention is assisted by using software as well as a range of assessments. This is successful, as seen by the students actively using the software and a decline in plagiarism attempts. A zero tolerance policy means that students caught cheating receive no mark. Both formative assessment as well as summative assessments also help to ensure students are demonstrating their learning. Internal and external moderation of exams and assessment decisions helps maintain the quality of the Foundation programme. The university partners who are fully engaged in this process say their input is valued and any suggestions always result in action. However, there is no formal moderation of General English writing and speaking assessments, although some cross-teaching of subjects provides some checks when this occurs.

The organisation has a layer of review mechanisms to determine the effectiveness of teaching, from informal discussions about student progress between tutors across levels and subjects, to the formal processes of five-weekly student progress reports, student evaluations, classroom observations, and annual staff self-reviews overseen by the director of studies of that programme. Outcomes of reviews are reported to the head office in Sydney to identify any improvements and what is working. This is working to provide a realistic view on teaching effectiveness.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

Several initiatives are in place to support the students in achieving their study goals. First, the tougher stance on attendance with early intervention activities has led to a significant drop in attrition and a lower number of final warnings. Foundation students in particular are made aware of their visa status if they do not comply with attendance policies. This is contributing to the successful outcomes.

Students receive advice from agents at enrolment on selecting the appropriate subjects to meet their goals, followed up with specific academic guidance provided at meetings with the tertiary counsellor and director of studies. Students are required to have an academic record and a relevant level of IELTS (International English Language Testing System) before they are admitted to appropriate Taylors

Foundation programme depending on their language and learning needs – 30 weeks for advanced students, or the full 60-week programme for those who may have additional English or other learning needs. All English language students are tested on their written and spoken English before they are enrolled in an appropriate class. Tutors and students are able to request a change in levels, which is assessed by the director of studies who keeps a record of movement between steps. Foundation programme students are able to trial their chosen subject areas for up to two weeks before confirming final subject areas. This is of significant benefit for international students who have not experienced the New Zealand teaching and learning environment before, and who may be taking subjects that are new to them. This flexibility demonstrates that students are given the appropriate guidance and support for their studies.

The revamp of the tutor mentor system in 2014 has enabled tutors to keep track of student progress and discuss academic or personal issues on a daily basis, as well as to capture attendance issues. The timetable ensures that students attend at least one class per day with their mentor tutor as well as fortnightly class meetings. The organisation introduced additional English classes to help Foundation students who are having difficulty in their studies, and this has been shown to increase pass rates.

Taylor's has a multi-layered approach to student welfare and support with an administration team to look after visas, insurance and general issues, and a student welfare team specifically for those students under the age of 18. The Foundation staff are very well informed and care is taken to involve students and their parents with the right advice and guidance for making decisions about the college and programme the student will enrol in. Agents are also supported in their advisory role with brochures in Chinese and other languages.

All homestay families are checked initially for suitability against set criteria (e.g. location, police vetting) and follow-up visits are carried out annually for over 18-year-olds and twice-yearly for those under 18. A handbook with advice on taking on a homestay student is provided to homestay carers. The welfare team is available 24/7 to support the needs of homestay providers and students. In addition, the organisation has employed a counsellor on site to help out with any difficult issues.

Overall, there is very low attrition and the organisation is responding to needs on all levels. This is evident from students' evaluations and attendance records.

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

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

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

Taylor's has centralised its core operations of recruitment, policy, finance, programme quality, and enrolment. The organisational structure enables efficiencies in teaching and provides systemised processes for staff to use. The Auckland campus follows the Study Group three-year business plan, and the head of college reports on the key performance indicators of student progression, retention, satisfaction and financial targets. The centralisation of data on results and satisfaction enables good benchmarking. The 2014 results show that the Auckland campus has high success with articulation and satisfaction in comparison with its other campuses. This was also remarked on by the senior management team interviewed during the visit, who demonstrated a good knowledge of the campus and activities.

The close relationship and clear communication between head office and Auckland is promoted through ongoing, regularly scheduled phone conferences, Skype and face-to-face meetings. This has enabled a good level of understanding by the general manager of Taylor's' uniqueness and, in turn, the general manager is open to innovations from Taylor's' head of college. Staff are involved in decision-making and new initiatives are shared at working parties involving all Australian and the Auckland heads of campus.

Being part of a wider team provides a risk framework for Auckland Taylor's to operate within. It involves research on the international student market and regulatory requirements and currency, which all affect enrolments at the college. Using the head office data, Taylor's identifies student numbers three months out for planning courses, around which each director of studies plans a suitable timetable. This helps tutors to take into account different intakes to ensure the students are not disadvantaged by late enrolments.

A six-monthly check by management of the Australia and New Zealand operations is carried out to see how well campus managers are dealing with staffing, results and financial targets, and the information is used to monitor achievement towards the key performance indicators. College heads meet quarterly to examine key indicators and share best practice, such as the remedial English classes the Auckland campus introduced last year. Sharing of ideas and resources is also made possible via the intranet.

The global organisation values itself on being student-focused, which is evident throughout the actions of the school. Ongoing review of policies is focused on improving students' welfare. An example of a policy change provided clearer information on grievances, and self-assessment action plans show a culture of continuous improvement and communication across campuses.

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 **Excellent**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Taylors Auckland Foundation Year

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Embassy General English courses

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Taylors College and Embassy CES:

- Focus on the short-term General English students' aims at enrolment to identify any needs to ensure programme match their intentions. For example, investigate the integration of New Zealand context into classes using the technology available.
- Conduct internal moderation of English students' written and spoken as well as grammar assessments at the beginning and throughout the course, possibly as part of professional development.

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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