



Report of External Evaluation and Review

EVAKONA Education Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 14 June 2011

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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

Location:	Head office, Whitianga
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	2002
Number of students:	Domestic: n/a International: 14 students
Number of staff:	Seven full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	General English and High School Preparation courses.
Sites:	Thames and Whitianga
Distinctive characteristics:	N/a
Recent significant changes:	N/a
Previous quality assurance history:	EVAKONA met all but one requirement at the previous quality assurance visit by NZQA. The requirement not met related to delays in transferring student fees into the student fee protection account. This has since been rectified.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review of EVAKONA included the following focus area:

- High School Preparation courses.

The following mandatory focus areas were also included:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- International student support.

EVAKONA also provides General English courses which high school students undertake as part of their high school preparation courses. Once students are enrolled at a New Zealand high school, the schools contract EVAKONA to provide additional English language training for their students.

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 external evaluation and review was conducted at the organisation's head office in Whitianga over two days by an NZQA lead evaluator and an external evaluator. The evaluation involved engagement with:

- The director of EVAKONA
- Academic manager, Whitianga
- Director of studies, Thames
- Director of studies, Whitianga
- Senior advisor and NZQA liaison
- Four tutors
- International student support staff
- International student deans of two high schools (Mercury Bay Area School and Thames High School)
- Current international students.

In addition, the evaluation team reviewed relevant documents, including graduate details, high school preparation student results, staff meeting minutes, an ongoing record of self-assessment activities, and student files.

EVAKONA Education Limited has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **EVAKONA Education Limited (EVAKONA)**.

EVAKONA is providing training that meets the needs of secondary school-age Japanese students, local high schools, and general English students.

The value of the training is indicated by the number of students who go on to enrol in university courses in their home country or in New Zealand as well as the number of high school preparation students that enrol in local high schools after they have completed their training at EVAKONA.

Teaching activities are classroom-based and help students to gain confidence in speaking, writing, listening, and reading English. Many students have not succeeded in the school system in their country but perform well in the learning environment provided by EVAKONA. Classes are small and content is focussed on subject areas that students would usually undertake at high school level. Tutors also encourage the students to be more interactive to help them adapt to learning in New Zealand high schools. The teaching is further enhanced by the pastoral support that students receive from staff. Students reported satisfaction with the tutors' teaching styles and their own improvements in English language abilities.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **EVAKONA Education Limited (EVAKONA)**.

EVAKONA reviewed its courses in 2010 which led to improvements in audiovisual and textbook resources. The organisation also monitors course outcomes to see where it can provide more assistance to help students achieve their goals. Staff are all involved in regular, ongoing review of courses and student learning improvements. For example, the organisation is monitoring the success of recent changes to the general English language programme in 2010 to determine whether the new format will be effective in meeting the learning outcomes required for students to further improve their English language skills. However, feedback from high school teaching staff could be formalised to confirm whether the content of high school preparation courses has contributed to learners' success at high schools in New Zealand.

TEO response

EVAKONA Education Limited has agreed to the factual accuracy of this report.

Findings¹

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 **Adequate**.

The majority of students completing the one-year high school preparation course go on to enrol in high schools in the region. The course not only improves language skills such as listening and speaking, but also helps students to be more interactive in the classroom, which is helpful for learning in a New Zealand high school context.

The students achieve unit standard credits in high school-related topics such as maths, computing, and communication at level 1, with some achieving level 2 unit standards. This enables students to enrol in related high school curriculum subjects at year 11. However, the organisation aims for 80 credit achievements so that students are able to enrol in year 12 subjects, but the results show that few achieve this. Although individual results were collated, there was no analysis of results to identify the overall average credit achievement of students.

EVAKONA has more success with students on general English courses because the IELTS achievement scores for their students are above the national average results. However, the organisation does not collate information on the improvement of the individual learners' language skills from enrolment to the completion of the course.

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 **Adequate**.

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

The high number of students that enrol in high school following the completion of the High School Preparation course indicates that it is meeting the needs of students. High school-age Japanese students come to study in New Zealand as an alternative to studying at senior high school in Japan. Many have not succeeded in the Japanese school system and coming to New Zealand to study at a high school for three years helps them to gain entry into Japanese universities. The organisation's outcome data shows that many EVAKONA students have entered into university here and overseas.

The New Zealand high schools also value the English language catch-up courses that the organisation provides to its international students because it gives them additional learning support outside of school to help them to cope better in the New Zealand education system.

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

The students on general English courses benefit from the training because it provides an environment where they can study without pressure and improve their English language abilities as well as their confidence in their own ability to study and express themselves.

Although EVAKONA records and monitors individual language scores and unit standard results, it has only recently begun to monitor student outcomes to see whether their educational goals are being achieved.

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 programmes match the needs of the students to gain sufficient English language skills and credits to enter into New Zealand high schools. The high school preparation course tailors its afternoon classes to meet high school curriculum subjects such as computing, maths, science, and communication skills. Students attend grammar and conversational classes in the morning, along with students on the general English courses. They are placed into the relevant level of language class based on ongoing assessment of their skills using Cutting Edge module assessments (a commonly used resource for teaching English as a second language) and tutor feedback.

Students enrolled in general English classes attend an afternoon class based on language skills, such as writing, using relevant activities, including journal writing, block reading, and group discussions. This programme was developed in 2010 based on feedback from students who liked learning about current affairs as it improved their confidence in using their language skills. The courses use resources from the internet as well as the Cutting Edge training modules. The courses are planned and taught using a common format to help with students' understanding of the learning outcomes. Whether this new programme has helped to increase IELTS scores for students is not yet known. The organisation intends to use this information as well as feedback from students prior to implementing the programme at its other site in Thames.

EVAKONA knows how well individual students succeed at high school from discussions with staff at the high schools as well as tutor and student feedback. While most students are succeeding, a more formal feedback system could be applied to gain feedback from high school teachers on whether English language catch-up classes are helping students to improve their English to enable them to do well at high school.

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**.

Teaching is effective in increasing students' overall confidence in using English language skills. For Japanese students, this was evident in their improved speaking and comprehension abilities. Saudi Arabian students reported that the teaching helped them to improve their grammar skills. This was supported by assessment results showing that, on average, it takes the students around three months to increase their level of English.

The individualised testing and subsequent learning support provided by tutors in response to results is used to help students to learn. The achievement of students is high; many previously have not succeeded in their education. This was supported by students' feedback showing they are engaged in classroom activities and attendance is very high.

Tutors meet weekly to discuss test results and to place students into the appropriate class according to their level of English language ability. These meetings are formalised and are also used to share good practices and review lesson plans. Tutors know how well students are doing because of the small classes and because each tutor teaches all the students during their time with EVAKONA.

Tutors are recruited based on their experience of teaching English as a second language and other relevant teaching qualifications. Currently, tutors' professional development needs, such as teaching classes with more than one level, are identified from tutor feedback and understanding of students' needs. The head tutor and academic manager are establishing more formal peer observation processes to improve their own practice and to provide feedback. Previously, this was not documented. The organisation has a good record of meeting external requirements for national assessments as required by NZQA.

Student profile forms are used to monitor progress towards their goals. These are reviewed monthly with the students so that they can also monitor their own progress. Student feedback indicates that the teachers are very supportive and provide individual learning support where required.

Overall, improvements in teaching effectiveness would be enhanced with better analysis of whether high school students do well academically in their chosen subjects in high school once they leave. This could be carried out using the evaluations students complete at the end of the course and more formal feedback from high school teachers.

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**.

EVAKONA supports learners prior to enrolment with information about its courses and about living and studying in New Zealand. Students learn about the course through EVAKONA's website or through contact from the director and director of studies, or through an agent in their own country. Information is provided in the prospective students' own language. The international student support person follows up to make arrangements if the student chooses to study with EVAKONA. At this time, the organisation gains information about the student to match them with a suitable homestay family. The organisation chooses homestays that are close to the school. Because Whitianga and Thames are small towns, EVAKONA knows many of the families. The feedback from students on their homestay families shows they are very happy with the selection.

The evidence supports that the organisation provides suitable pastoral care for its students. Students settle in quickly because of the appropriate homestay selections and friendly staff. In addition, activities, including social activities held every Friday and international days, help students to make friends with students their own age from other cultures. EVAKONA also has a partnership with the Mercury Area School to enable students to experience the Spirit of Adventure seafaring activities to help them to build in confidence and develop personally.

All students are interviewed about their goals and formally assessed on their English language abilities at enrolment. They are then placed into classes according to their level of English language needs. The classes are small, usually up to eight, which enables the tutors to provide individualised support.

There is a high level of monitoring of students' well-being at EVAKONA to ensure students are happy with their homestay families. Staff are also in regular contact with parents and high school international deans.

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**.

EVAKONA is a small organisation with the director responsible for the Thames and Whitianga sites. Both sites also have a director of studies, and along with the academic manager, senior advisor and the director make up the senior executive team which is responsible for identifying and responding to market needs. This team has demonstrated its responsiveness to the needs of different nationalities by identifying suitable courses that could attract potential students.

Overall, staff reported that the organisation provides helpful support and direction. Because of the size of the organisation, staff perform multiple roles and the organisation is very supportive of staff initiatives to enable students to achieve.

The organisation's self-assessment is carried out formally, with monthly reviews of learners' results to ensure course content remains relevant to the learners' needs. Actions are taken as a result of these reviews, which are recorded and improvements noted for all staff to see. As a result of its self-assessment, the organisation has improved the format and consistency of lessons between classes and in formalising processes. The organisation updated resources in 2010 to include more audiovisual equipment to enable access to internet resources for classes to increase the range and to update learning activities. However, the organisation needs to ensure that it has appropriate success measures in place to identify how changes to the courses have led to improvements in learner outcomes.

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: High School Preparation

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

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

2.3 Focus area: International student support

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.

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

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 non-university TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses 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 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/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>*

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