

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

EVAKONA Education Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 22 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

Name of TEO:	EVAKONA Education Limited (EVAKONA)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	25 March 2002
Location:	18 South Highway, Whitianga, Coromandel Peninsula
Delivery sites:	(In addition to the location above): 415 Mackay Street, Thames, Coromandel Peninsula
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High School Preparation Course</li><li>• General English courses</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes; also holds additional approvals for enrolling young international group with students aged 10-13, and students aged 11-13 who will live in New Zealand without a parent.
Number of students:	International: 50
Number of staff:	Seven full-time and 10 part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	A variety of standards at NCEA level 1 and unit standards in English Language up to level 4
Distinctive characteristics:	EVAKONA is a small English language school which offers General English courses to learners of all ages and nationalities. EVAKONA also caters for young Japanese learners, equipping them with the language and study skills necessary to progress to NCEA level 2 studies in New

Zealand high schools.

EVAKONA also runs additional academic support classes after school hours for graduates who successfully progress to local high schools.

Recent significant changes: NA

Previous quality assurance history: The previous NZQA external evaluation and review of EVAKONA was conducted in 2011. NZQA was Confident in both EVAKONA's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

Results from the 2014 NZQA national external moderation of standards for EVAKONA were good, with all three assessor decisions meeting national external moderation requirements.

Other: EVAKONA currently receives no funding from any government agencies.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Governance, management and strategy is a mandatory focus area. In addition, the following focus areas were also selected:

- International students

International students was selected as a focus area given that EVAKONA's target market includes very young international learners.

- General English

While the High School Preparation course is a large part of EVAKONA's business, the timing of the evaluation's on-site visit did not facilitate the selection of that course as a focus area (with learners only arriving the week of the on-site visit). Therefore, General English was selected instead as the focus area.

### 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.*

Self-assessment materials were delivered to NZQA in a timely fashion to inform the scoping of this external evaluation and review.

The evaluation team comprised two evaluators, one of whom is a current practitioner in the English language sector and possesses specialist knowledge of English language schools.

The on-site visit at the Whitianga campus lasted 11 hours (split over two days).

The evaluation team did not visit the Thames campus as the majority of learners are concentrated in the Whitianga campus. During the week of the on-site visit, the Thames campus only had eight enrolled learners. The two student support staff based at the Thames campus travelled to Whitianga and were interviewed by the lead evaluator.

The evaluation team interviewed the management team (comprising the principal, the administration manager, the deputy principal, the director of studies and the head teacher), five contracted English teachers, the marketing manager, all student support officers and homestay coordinators from both Whitianga and Thames campuses, the administration assistant and seven learners.

# Summary of Results

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

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **EVAKONA**.

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **EVAKONA**.

- EVAKONA provides education of value and a pathway to universities to mainly Japanese learners who otherwise may have failed under the Japanese education system (see Findings 1.2 and 1.3).
- EVAKONA provides exemplary pastoral support to its Japanese learners, well beyond the minimum requirements specified under the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (see Findings 1.5).
- All English learners complete their enrolled duration, gain improvements in their English skills, improve their confidence, and experience New Zealand life through homestays and activities organised by EVAKONA (see Findings 1.1 and 1.2).
- All but one graduate from the 2014 cohort achieved NCEA level 1 (see Findings 1.1).
- EVAKONA supports the local economy by supplying a small rural township with a constant stream of visitors. Cultural exchange opportunities are valued by the local population. Local high schools receive academically and culturally prepared international learners for year 12 and 13 study (see Findings 1.2 and 1.3).
- EVAKONA teachers are well qualified. English teachers are very reflective in their practice (see Findings 1.4).

Overall, the evaluation team found EVAKONA to be a solid performer in a predominantly Japanese market. There are, however, lots of improvement opportunities as well:

- EVAKONA needs an operational moderation system to ensure ongoing assurance of the validity of its assessor decisions (see Findings 1.1). For the purpose of this external evaluation and review, this was considered a risk, not an issue, given that EVAKONA passed NZQA's national external moderation in 2014.
- Governance and management will be further strengthened by an ongoing, proactive reflection on the organisation's operations (see Findings 1.6).
- Better use of graduate destination outcome data and collection of graduate educational performance data post-EVAKONA could further supplement the self-assessment system (see Findings 1.2 and 1.3).

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 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 **Adequate**.

All learners achieve at EVAKONA. Learners enrolled for an average duration of six months (with the exception of seasonal groups). No learners have dropped out – all complete the enrolled duration. Learners are assessed on arrival and also at exit using the same paper-based assessment materials to ascertain progress – all learners attain various levels of improvement in the use of the English language. This is also confirmed in exit surveys.

Beyond English language skills, learners also gain life experience and become stronger, more resilient people. Learners interviewed by the evaluation team demonstrated confidence in their communication skills and in interacting with officials – this is particularly impressive given the very young age and cultural background of the learners.

There were 14 learners enrolled in the High School Preparation course in 2014. All except one achieved NCEA level 1. This was a significant and essential improvement from its 2013 performance, where none of the nine learners then achieved NCEA level 1 and only achieved between 16 and 69 credits. The improvement was a result of a programme review in early 2014, when EVAKONA replaced the English standards with English Language unit standards (a NCEA subject formerly categorised as ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages).

Learner achievement for the High School Preparation course is, so far, validated, as NZQA judged that EVAKONA met national external moderation requirements in 2014. However, the lack of any internal and external moderation to date (other than that initiated by NZQA) causes some concerns. This is exacerbated by the fact that all standards within the EVAKONA High School Preparation course are internally assessed (an informed and conscious decision in EVAKONA's programme design). A comprehensive, robust moderation system needs to be in place to ensure ongoing validity of learner achievement and to mitigate any associated risk. The evaluation team acknowledges that EVAKONA recently held discussions with a local high school and is in the process of implementing a moderation system.

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

## 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 **Good**.

In the Japanese environment, entrance to university (especially prestigious universities) is considered an achievement on its own and is highly valued by parents. This results in the Japanese education system being highly competitive. Some learners find the experience stressful and intolerable and thus fail during secondary education. EVAKONA provides an alternative pathway for entrance to Japanese universities as overseas returned applicants are considered under a different system (without the need to sit national external university entrance examinations). This is of significant value to the learners and their families.

EVAKONA tracks all of its High School Preparation graduates. Out of the 72 graduates since 2002, 66 progressed to further secondary education in New Zealand high schools. A good proportion subsequently progressed to tertiary education in Japan (41 per cent), New Zealand (27 per cent), America, Australia and Taiwan. There exists the potential to further improve the use of graduate destination data, for EVAKONA's self-reflection as well as for marketing purposes. Graduates' academic performance data post-EVAKONA passed on from high school partners could be formalised and analysed to provide evidence of the value of outcomes, as well as to inform ongoing programme review.

Exit surveys generally confirm that graduates value their experience and achievement at EVAKONA. Many learners were referred to EVAKONA by word of mouth, an indicator of the school's reputation overseas. General English learners improve their English skills as well as experience the New Zealand lifestyle through homestays and activities arranged by EVAKONA.

Within its community, EVAKONA provides cultural exchange opportunities for a small rural township. It also brings in a significant number of visitors (learners and their families) throughout the year, which is of economic importance to Whitianga, especially during the off-peak tourist season. EVAKONA supplies local high schools with a small yet vital number of international students, who are well prepared for their year 12 and 13 studies in New Zealand. The school continues to support its graduates through the provision of additional language and subject tuition after school at a cost.



### 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**.

EVAKONA operates in a niche, predominantly Japanese market. The school fully understands and capitalises on Japanese parents' desire for an alternative pathway for their children to be admitted into Japanese universities. The High School Preparation course matches such demand well, and prepares learners academically and culturally for further secondary education in New Zealand before returning to Japan for tertiary studies. A second chance is provided to these Japanese learners who may otherwise fail under the Japanese education system. EVAKONA operates a comprehensive, individualised support system to ensure the well-being and ongoing educational success of this vulnerable group of learners (also see Findings 1.5).

The High School Preparation course is deliberately designed to focus on foundation study skills, aiming for a smooth transition to New Zealand high schools for year 12 studies. There is no choice in subjects, as the school made an informed decision based on their understanding of students' capabilities (the curriculum includes English Language, mathematics, physics, economics and computing). As the Japanese academic year ends in March, the High School Preparation course begins in April and runs until January the following year. Therefore no externally assessed standards are included in the course. For reasons explained above, EVAKONA does not consider the lack of subject endorsement opportunities a concern to learners.

EVAKONA communicates regularly with its high school partners and overseas agents to keep them abreast of trends and changes within its operating environment. There is evidence of programme review, and improvements in both programme design and outcomes are noted (see Findings 1.1). Programme reviews, however, could be further enhanced by having more external input.

EVAKONA also demonstrates strong understanding of the characteristics and learning requirements of learners from different ethnic backgrounds. The majority of learners are Japanese and desire support in speaking and pronunciation. A small group of Saudi Arabian learners are confident speakers but require a focus on writing. EVAKONA has in place strategies to cater to these different requirements. Exit surveys generally confirm that learners' study objectives have been achieved.

## 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 at EVAKONA. All teachers are well qualified – all possess a TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) or CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) qualification, and some hold a university degree or teaching qualification. The evaluation team observed a passionate teaching team, highly enthusiastic in teaching English and very reflective in their practices. A variety of teaching methods are used and EVAKONA recently enhanced its technology infrastructure to complement a new set of teaching materials.

Regular observation sessions are conducted by members of the management team. The evaluation team commends the effectiveness of managerial observations – allowing the teacher being observed to be reflective of their own practice as well as providing valuable feedback and discussion opportunities for further enhancements. Surveys at exit point invite learners to evaluate the teaching, and the information collected is processed and shared with the teachers.

Internal professional development sessions are run once per month and all staff are invited and paid to attend regardless of the nature of their employment. English teachers all demonstrate a desire to further engage in external professional development opportunities – however, such opportunities are currently few and far between in EVAKONA. The school is planning to extend professional development sessions through the use of online webinars.

Performance appraisals are yet to be fully implemented. Given the size of the school and the close connection between management and staff, this is not a significant concern to the evaluation team.

## 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 **Good**.

EVAKONA provides exemplary pastoral support to all its learners, well beyond the minimum requirements specified under the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. The school understands foreign cultures well and is highly successful in motivating its learners to attend and achieve.

Young, underage learners are looked after individually. The school gathers intelligence on this group of learners' well-being through a number of sources: observations by teachers, discussions with homestay providers, quarterly homestay visits and inspections, monitoring of attendance and academic progress. Reports,

written in English and in Japanese, on both academic progress and well-being, are produced for overseas parents on a quarterly basis.

All learners are inducted into the new learning and living environment – for Japanese learners, induction is conducted in Japanese. Learners are interviewed one week after enrolment to confirm placement accuracy as well as to assure ongoing well-being. Teachers meet with learners individually on a regular basis, again to discuss academic progress and well-being matters. Requests for homestay changes are generally accommodated. Homestay families are given comprehensive materials to support their obligations in hosting young foreign learners.

Given that learners can be as young as 10 years old, it is important for EVAKONA to refresh its police checks on staff and homestay family members on a regular basis. This was not realised until pointed out by the evaluation team.

## 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 **Adequate**.

EVAKONA's governance and management performs well within its specialty area – providing the Japanese market with an alternative, transitional pathway that eventually leads to university entrance for very young learners who may otherwise fail in the Japanese education system. Led by a Japanese principal who is also the owner of the school, EVAKONA possesses in-depth knowledge of working with such learners and has demonstrated success in this continuously.

All staff are highly engaged, feel valued and are given a lot of autonomy to contribute to the operations of EVAKONA. There is a clear division of responsibilities. Staff work well as a team and the organisational structure is effective and purposeful for the size of the school. Turnover is very low. Institutional knowledge is well maintained and capitalised on.

However, EVAKONA also appears to be rather insular. Its geographical isolation is a challenge to networking with the wider sector, creating obstacles to sharing intelligence and creative thinking. There is further potential to expand areas of cooperation with the secondary school partners (especially in programme design and review, and external moderation). EVAKONA does not appear to be highly innovative – which may not be a huge concern so long as the school continues to operate primarily within its current focus. However, if the school considers expanding into other markets, it must build and strengthen its capability accordingly.

There is some evidence that EVAKONA's self-assessment has led to some improvements, such as the replacement of standards in the High School

Preparation course aforementioned. The evaluation team noted that the school certainly has the capability to reflect, as evident during the on-site visit. The issue of refreshing police checks on a regular basis was very quickly realised and actions planned accordingly. However, such reflection, ideally, should be more timely and on a continuous basis, and should not require to be instigated by an external authority. There is plenty of room to improve at governance and management level to ensure self-assessment is comprehensive, coherent and robust in the school's business-as-usual operations.

## 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 **Adequate**.

### 2.2 Focus area: International students

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

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

### 2.3 Focus area: General English

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

NZQA recommends that EVAKONA:

- Implement a moderation system for ongoing assurance of the validity of unit standard assessments. This may include capitalising on EVAKONA's very strong partnerships with local high schools for external moderation.
- Further strengthen governance and management with an ongoing, proactive approach to reviewing all aspects of operations.
- Reduce reliance on one staff member's understanding of the NCEA system and invite external input to contribute towards the periodic programme review of its High School Preparation course.
- Expand analysis and usage of graduate destination outcomes data.
- Consider options to gather educational performance information on High School Preparation graduates from local secondary schools, to further show evidence of the value of outcomes and to inform ongoing programme review.
- Explore external professional development opportunities for all teaching staff.
- Explore methods to ascertain learners' improvement in speaking and writing skills at exit point, in conjunction with the existing assessment process.

# 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](http://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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*Final Report*