Report of External Evaluation and Review

International College of Auckland Limited

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

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Contents

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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:	International College of Auckland Limited
Location:	1 Rankin Avenue, New Lynn, Auckland
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	2002
Number of students:	Domestic: two equivalent full-time students
	International: 164 equivalent full-time students
Number of staff:	15 full-time staff
	Two part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	• Certificate in Academic English (IELTS Academic Preparation) (Level 3)
	• Diploma in Business (Level 7)
	• Diploma in Computer Systems Support (Advanced) (Level 7)
	• National Certificate in Horticulture (Level 4)
	• National Diploma in Business (Level 5)
	• National Diploma in Computing (Level 5)
	• New Zealand Diploma in Business (Level 6)
	• NZIM Diploma in Management (Level 5)
	• NZIM Diploma in Management (Advanced) (Level 6)
Sites:	One as above

Distinctive characteristics:	International College of Auckland (ICA) primarily enrols international students, and offers tertiary education programmes in computing (including preparation for Microsoft certifications: Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) – MCTS Active Directory, MCTS Server Administrator – Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP)), and management and business programmes at diploma levels 5 and 6.
Recent significant changes:	ICA has recently decided to stop offering programmes in early childhood education and horticulture, and has suspended offering NZ Diploma in Business (NZDipBus) (Level 6).
Previous quality assurance history:	The most recent NZQA quality review was an audit in 2009, where all but one requirement was met.
	Over the past four years the external moderation of ICA's assessments and assessment processes has resulted in many instances where the submitted materials and the assessors' judgments have not met the national standard. This has been in relation to NZDipBus prescriptions, New Zealand Qualification Framework (NZQF) unit standard moderation as conducted by NZQA, and horticulture unit standards moderated by the New Zealand Horticulture Industry Training Organisation (NZHITO).

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This evaluation included two mandatory focus areas: governance, management, and strategy, and international student support, and the following programme areas:

- The NZIM Diploma in Management (Level 5); this was chosen as a focus area because it comprises NZDipBus prescriptions and attracts the largest number of students.

- National Diploma in Business (Level 5); this was chosen as a focus area because it comprises NZQF unit standards and has the second highest number of enrolments.

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.

A team of two evaluators visited ICA over three days. The team met with the organisation's two owners, the academic advisory board, the management team, and groups of lecturers and administration staff as well as groups of students, and had phone contact with a number of external stakeholders. A range of ICA's documents and records were also reviewed as part of this evaluation.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the educational performance of **International College of Auckland Limited.**

ICA students achieve a high level of success across the majority of programmes offered, with achievement rates at or above nationally published achievement statistics. However, over the past four years the external moderation of ICA's assessments and assessment processes has resulted in many instances where the submitted materials and the assessors' judgments have not met the national standard.

This has been in relation to NZDipBus prescriptions, New Zealand Qualification Framework (NZQF) unit standard moderation conducted by NZQA, and horticulture unit standards moderated by the NZHITO. ICA lost its funding from the Tertiary Education Commission in 2010, because of low achievement against the commission's educational performance indicators in 2009.

However, the organisation has made progress in lifting the quality of assessment design and practice. This has resulted in improvements to, for example, computing assessment, which increases the validity of the academic results. This improvement was evidenced at this evaluation through the organisation's self-assessment analysis of areas of weakness, actions taken, and improvements made, and confirmed through staff and student interviews as well as through interviews with external consultants and staff from a tertiary education institute contracted to provide mentoring and oversight.

ICA has also made significant changes to address identified issues with its assessments. These have included appointing more full-time staff and specifically requiring training or qualifications in assessment and moderation of assessment for all staff. The two owners of ICA and their appointed department heads have actively engaged with their contracted assessment specialists to build their knowledge and skills in assessment and moderation. The most recent national moderation of computing unit standards by NZQA resulted in both samples meeting the national standard, with no modification required.

ICA's department heads review their programme achievement rates against publicly available national achievement figures, such as those found on the Ministry of Education and NZQA websites.

The organisation is supporting its international students very well and actively reviews its compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. No issues or concerns came to the attention of the evaluators. The organisation has recently established a team of four staff dedicated to the support and guidance of its international students, where there was previously one key staff. This appears to be resulting in appropriate

information going to students at enrolment, and a consistent level of support during the length of their enrolment, including extra services such as support to find employment.

ICA has an active and effective advisory board with members drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, including local business associations, education specialists with past teaching and management experience, and a staff and student representative.

The evaluation team acknowledges that ICA has made some improvements and positive changes to the organisation's capability in designing and conducting assessment as well as the internal moderation of assessment. However, at the time of this evaluation there was not yet sufficient evidence to show that these improvements are resulting in assessment tools and practices meeting the national standard consistently across all programmes.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **International College of Auckland Limited.**

ICA has developed and implemented a structured and comprehensive set of processes to reflect on and review its educational performance. The matter of primary concern, which has been affecting educational performance at ICA in recent years, is the ongoing external moderation failures, but this issue has been well analysed and responded to. Evidence reviewed at this evaluation shows that the organisation's self-assessment processes are addressing the quality of assessment and the internal moderation of assessment.

The range of processes to improve assessment includes building staff capability, with an expectation that all staff either hold or undertake training to achieve three key unit standards for carrying out assessment, writing assessment material, and moderating assessment. Staff are also being mentored and supported through contracted assessment specialists and a polytechnic. These processes are having a real impact on and are improving the reliability and validity of ICA's internal pre-assessment and post-assessment moderation practices. One indicator of this is that the most recent external moderation of computing unit standards resulted in both the submitted materials and assessors' judgements being approved and meeting the national standard.

ICA's self-assessment processes now include all staff and there is improved documentation for reflection and analysis of the organisation's educational performance. This was well evidenced at this evaluation through the likes of tutors' reflective journals, programme reviews, and meeting minutes.

ICA primarily enrols international students, and the needs of these students are reasonably well established at enrolment and addressed in the programmes. The organisation's self-assessment includes analysis of how well it is meeting the needs of its students, through a combination of informal student comments and

student surveys. This is working well and no issues or concerns regarding international students were evidenced at this evaluation.

The evaluation team considers that ICA has established manageable self-assessment processes and is embedding these across the organisation. Evidence reviewed at this evaluation indicated that these processes are now leading to some genuine improvements to the validity of students' achievements.

Findings[1]

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Students at ICA achieve well, either at or above nationally published achievement statistics.[2] Course achievement rates across most programmes for 2010 and 2011 range from 44 per cent to 100 per cent. Most course achievement rates are above 70 per cent. The number of students affected by the low course achievements is low.

However, the validity of achievement data has been under question in the past because of ongoing weaknesses in assessment design and practice being identified through national external moderation by NZQA and the Horticulture Industry Training Organisation.

Tutors are noticing that students are identifying significant 'soft skills' achievement. Examples were provided where students have discussed developing and applying new skills such as critical thinking, conflict resolution, and increased confidence and intercultural communication skills in part-time employment and in the wider community. These are significant achievements in that the learners are international students, studying and applying skills within the New Zealand cultural context, which is very different to that of their home countries.

While there are some variations in student achievements across courses, the organisation's self-assessment processes are identifying issues on specific courses. One example of this is with plagiarism, which was identified and addressed by improved information during orientation and the introduction of electronic software to identify plagiarism where this was occurring.

The evaluation team acknowledges the improvements and positive changes that ICA has made to improve the organisation's capability in designing and conducting assessment and the internal moderation of assessment. However, at the time of this evaluation, apart from the moderation of the computing programme, there was not yet sufficient evidence to show that these improvements are resulting in assessment tools and practices meeting the national standard consistently across programmes. This evidence is essential to validate achievement rates.

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

[2] ICA references the Ministry of Education Education Counts website and NZQA's published achievement data for NZ Diploma in Business prescriptions.

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 **Adequate.**

Students are gaining valuable soft skills, qualifications, and internationally recognised IT certifications, leading to employment opportunities within New Zealand and in students' home countries. ICA is evidencing this primarily through informal students' anecdotes during and after enrolment.

Student surveys are carried out regularly, and the organisation's analysis of this data indicates a high level of student satisfaction with the education provided, and satisfaction with how students are enabled to apply this learning in their part-time workplaces while studying. Analysis of surveys also shows that students value studying in a Western learning environment, including research and assignment writing, developing critical thinking skills, and extending their cross-cultural understanding. This was also noted as a valued outcome by stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team.

The organisation conducts exit interviews to establish students' intentions, and these provide the organisation with some information regarding the benefits gained by students. Staff interviewed at this evaluation noted that their discussions with students often bring up stories and events verifying the benefits gained, as already noted above. However, the organisation does not yet have strong or complete graduate destination data, such as the number or percentage of its graduates who gain employment within New Zealand or in their home countries, or the types of positions gained.

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.**

ICA has well-developed processes at enrolment and during orientation to identify students' learning needs and work aspirations. The organisation has reasonable evidence to show that the needs of stakeholders, including students, are being met. For example, during orientation a wide number of local community organisations speak with students to raise the awareness of support and activities available locally, and this is appreciated by the students.

In the past, the organisation has had some issues with applying the prerequisite International English Language Testing System (IELTS) requirement for enrolment to higher-level programmes. This has been effectively addressed through ICA registering with the IELTS online electronic verification service for IELTS

examination results. No concerns in this regard were identified by the evaluators at this evaluation.

ICA has been introducing a number of processes to better match students' needs. These include: a new computer lab which is providing students with effective internet access to support their studies; visiting industry speakers who are providing students with business scenarios; and a range of case studies used in the business programmes to support application of the students' learning. While total hours have remained the same, course lengths have been reduced, which has helped students focus on one course at a time, and early indications are that this change is improving students' learning. The organisation has also recently been using a strengths survey to help students identify their strengths. The combination of these factors is effective, as evidenced through student satisfaction ratings and confirmed though evaluators' interviews with students, staff, and external stakeholders.

The organisation's self-assessment is proving effective in identifying how well it is matching students' and other stakeholders' needs.

1.4   How effective is the teaching?

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

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

ICA was able to present a range of evidence to support the effectiveness of learning and teaching. This included students' anecdotes in regard to soft skills achievements, their ability to apply their learning in work environments, and course achievement rates.

The organisation has a range of processes to verify teacher performance, such as teaching observations and an annual performance appraisal process, which form the basis of ongoing professional development. These appear to be effective in identifying strengths and areas for further development. Professional development opportunities are supported by management. Staff attend seminars and are enrolled in further study in adult education as well as specific training to improve their knowledge and skills with assessment and the moderation of assessment.

Management now has a policy of requiring new staff to have adult teaching qualifications or to be enrolled in study towards adult teacher training, and is employing more full-time staff. The shift away from predominantly part-time staff is resulting in improved retention of skilled staff as well as improved staff morale and motivation.

Management has also established ongoing memorandums of understanding with assessment specialists and a polytechnic to mentor and support staff to improve and develop ICA's internal capability in this area. This is resulting in improved processes and staff skills but, as already noted, beyond computing it is too early to

know how effective this initiative is in improving how well ICA's assessments are meeting the national standard.

The evaluators noted significant developments in the organisation's self-assessment in this area, and this was also identified by the organisation's advisory board members. For example, staff are keeping reflective journals, which are proving to be valuable personally as well as with colleagues in sharing their learnings. Staff-only days are held to review the organisation's performance using the six key evaluation questions developed by NZQA. Staff and management noted that this activity has helped to focus review discussions. Members of ICA's advisory board have also noted improvements in the organisation's ability to review its own performance.

Shortly after this evaluation the NZHITO carried out a site moderation visit. This was conducted because ICA has "*not completed its moderation requirements for the past 3 years. Moderation Reports have been provided to ICA on an annual basis, identifying that moderation requirements have not been met and detailing actions that need to be taken to remedy the situation*". The result of this visit is that the NZHITO "*does not have confidence in ICA's ability to assess to the national standard and is seeking removal of their horticulture accreditation*".

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.**

Students are well supported to be safe in what is a new and very different cultural environment for most. A good level of information is provided to students at orientation, to ensure they understand the organisation's requirements and expectations, such as for attendance and plagiarism. Students are also supplied with information and listen to visiting speakers, introducing students to support networks available within ICA and the wider Auckland community.

Within the predominantly international student population, the organisation currently has 12 international students under the age of 18 years, and the specific requirements of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students are well met. The organisation has good internal processes to check that it is providing sufficient current information to all students, and is maintaining appropriate student enrolment and academic records that meet the requirements of the code.

Students interviewed as part of this evaluation confirmed the organisation's own analysis of student survey results, which showed that students feel well supported at ICA. Students interviewed noted that the best thing about ICA is the learning environment and the responsiveness of staff in answering queries.

The organisation has recently moved premises to enable four staff to be specifically dedicated to student support, including helping students find part-time work that fits their student visa and field of study. This is working well and appears to have strengthened student support, although it is too soon to see specific outcomes.

The organisation has effective processes to monitor how well it is supporting students, to monitor its own compliance with the Code of Practice, and to report this to the Ministry of Education as required. A recent handover of responsibility from one key staff to the four new staff responsible for student support provided a good transfer of knowledge and understanding.

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

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

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

The two owners and the management team of ICA have made significant changes towards improving the validity of educational achievement. They now have a structured and purposeful plan to support educational achievement which is validated through sound assessment practice carried out to the national standard. Early indications are that this will be successful, as evidenced by the recent national external moderation of computing unit standards assessments. However, this moderation success includes a limited part of ICA's overall range of educational programmes. The evaluation team considers that it is too early to confirm the overall improvement to assessment practice. The improvement to date will need to be further validated through external moderation to ascertain whether assessments are now designed to and conducted at the national standard.

The organisation has a clear moderation action plan for 2012, which is designed to ensure ICA has:

- Sufficient input from specialists

- Mentoring and support for heads of departments

- Formal staff training and development in conducting assessment

- Effective design and moderation of assessment (unit standards 4098, 11551, and 11552)

- Continuing staff academic meetings

- Ongoing monitoring of teaching and moderation by the advisory board.

The success of this plan will be measured as noted above, by external moderation continuing to confirm that ICA meets the national standard across all programmes.

The advisory board is actively involved in the management of ICA and combines the roles of governance and advice. The board includes a president of a local

business association, past and current managers of private training establishments, an accountant, staff, and student representatives. Evidence presented at this evaluation indicated that this board is effective in providing sound educational and business advice, and that management listens to and applies this advice.

ICA is well resourced overall in terms of classroom space and equipment, internet speed and access, and a memorandum of understanding with the local public library, which includes student access to a range of academic journals. ICA also has supporting technology such as data projectors. Some classrooms are not well set up to use data projectors, but ICA management has indicated that this is currently being improved, for example by the purchase of mobile or pull-down projector screens.

ICA management is also currently consolidating its programmes to focus more directly on educational achievement in those areas attracting most student enrolments. In this regard, the organisation is currently not accepting new enrolments to its early childhood education and horticulture programmes.

The owners have over the past 12-18 months developed a structured and comprehensive plan to review all aspects of its operation. This has included all staff and all programmes. Staff interviewed at this evaluation were knowledgeable and conversant with the organisation's processes to review its operation, the results of the reviews, and the steps taken to make improvements to learner achievement. A number of cross-checks exist between department heads and administrative staff, which confirm the accuracy of achievement data held in the academic database.

The academic database currently does not have the functionality for management to extract reports for the analysis of educational performance in fine detail, for example to compare student achievement by ethnicity, gender, across programmes, or over time. The organisation currently extracts performance data manually for the analysis of its educational performance. This is time-consuming and restricts, at least to some extent, how well management can review educational performance.

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 **Adequate.**

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

2.2   Focus area: International students

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

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

2.3   Focus area: NZIM Diploma in Management (Level 5)

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

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

2.4   Focus area: National Diploma in Business (Level 5)

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, other than those expressed or implied within the report.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of programme approval and accreditation (under sections 249 and 250 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Programmes established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act and published in the Gazette of 28 July 2011 at page 3207. These policies and criteria are deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under the new section 253.

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 programmes they own or provide. These criteria and policies are also deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under section 253. Section 233B(1) of the Act requires registered PTEs to comply with these rules.

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 EER process 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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