



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Foundation English Limited

Date of report: 1 June 2010

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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.

Brief description of TEO

Location: Level 8, 246 Queen Street, Auckland

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: Four international students and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Intensive Literacy and Numeracy funding for 100 learners, being 100 hours of direct delivery within a 5-20 week period

Sites: As above

Foundation English Limited (FEL) was first registered as a training provider in May 2002. In 2007 FEL was acquired by the Queens Academic Group (QAG) and from that point FEL and QAG have shared facilities, resources, and staff. FEL is encouraging international students, referred to them by agents, to enrol with QAG and is choosing to focus on the TEC-funded learners, offering literacy and numeracy and English for new migrants. FEL has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Te Piataata Trust to deliver intensive literacy and numeracy to Māori learners in West Auckland. The programme run by the trust under the MOU is Tiaho Ngā Whetū. The trust was established to work with young learners who had begun to disengage from formal education. FEL and QAG pride themselves on their multicultural staff and student body. An upcoming staff shared lunch is planned to feature food from 15 different cultures represented.

Programmes FEL offers include:

- General English
- Business English
- TEC-funded English for New Migrants
- TEC-funded Literacy and Numeracy.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Foundation English Limited**.

- Certificate achievement rates for learners who enrol on the General English programme are consistently high at 90 per cent. For TEC-funded learners, 100 per cent of the new migrants who answered a follow-up survey believed they had met their goal to improve their English.
- New migrant learners, surveyed by the organisation, state that they are using their new-found confidence and skills to enrol into further study and to better integrate into New Zealand society. Some learners have gained the confidence to find employment.
- The organisation has established good links with the wider community, which has enabled the delivery of literacy and numeracy to Māori and Pasifika learners in West Auckland.
- Good processes and practices exist to ensure that learning and teaching is effective.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Foundation English Limited**.

- There are good processes to ensure that learners' and other key stakeholders' feedback is collected and analysed and used to effect improvements.
- Achievements of individual learners are closely monitored and data is collected to enable comparisons across the different courses.
- The organisation recognises the need to improve the analysis of achievement and outcome data.

TEO response

Foundation English Limited have confirmed and accepted this report.

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 TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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).

Findings

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

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/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of FEL included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support (including internationals).

The following programme focus area was included:

- Intensive Literacy and Numeracy funded project.

This funding is the main focus of the organisation at the moment and a focus for the future.

Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Context

The few international students who study with FEL enrol in the General English programme. The new-migrant, TEC-funded students also study the General English programme. The TEC-funded students who are working with the Te Piataata Trust complete a literacy and numeracy programme designed by that organisation with a focus on whānau development. Numeracy is yet to be integrated into the new migrants' programme at FEL and the first attempt at introducing numeracy to the Tiaho Ngā Whetū students met

with some resistance. The trust plan, to adjust the delivery for 2010, aims to ensure that the numeracy taught is grounded in real-life contexts.

Explanation

There is a high retention and completion rate in the General English programme, with poor attendance being the main reason why 10 per cent of learners do not complete. The programme is structured around five-week cycles with learners' skills being assessed at the end of the cycle. Achievement in the four strands – reading and writing, speaking and listening – is then recorded for each learner. At the end of each cycle approximately 50 per cent of learners are promoted to the next level, although results for different classes vary widely. The director of studies analyses these promotions and discusses them with individual tutors.

Important achievements were made by the learners on the Tiaho Ngā Whetū programme. The trust reported learners making gains of at least one step in at least three of the strands of the adult literacy learning progressions. Also, Te Piataata reported that a significant gain was the level of confidence the learners displayed relating to literacy tasks. Learning gains for the TEC-funded students will be easier to monitor in 2010 with the introduction of TEC's National Assessment Tool for literacy and numeracy.

While the director and director of studies have a good sense of how well learners are achieving, they acknowledge that analysis and benchmarking would help them to better understand this information. For instance, there has been little analysis to determine how long the average learner takes to progress from one level to the next, and how that compares with previous years or other organisations. More robust tools are needed to measure learning gains in literacy and numeracy and it is hoped the National Assessment Tool will be fit for this purpose.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

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

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

Context

The new migrants who enrol with FEL want to learn English to give them confidence and to help them integrate into their new country. For learners who enrol on the Tiaho Ngā Whetū programme the goals are to increase their confidence in working with the everyday texts they encounter in their daily lives. Many of these students and the international students who enrol with FEL are aiming to use their new skills to enable them to enrol in further education.

Explanation

Valued outcomes were noted for many of the learners who participated in the TEC-funded programmes. For the new migrants, 100 per cent felt they had achieved their goal to improve their English and, anecdotally, some had used these skills to find work or further

study. Confidence in using English and a sense of integration into the New Zealand community were also noted.

The valued outcomes for Te Piataata Trust students included gains in confidence, especially in speaking to communicate and in approaching literacy tasks. Some of these learners had Te Reo Māori as their first language and they valued improving their ability to speak confidently in English in front of other people. All the learners believed they could transfer the learning to other aspects of their lives.

It was difficult to establish the valued outcomes for the international students as there is no process for tracking graduates. Some feedback had been received and it appears that some learners continue to study, on diploma or degree programmes or on university preparation programmes.

The partnership with Te Piataata Trust is a valuable outcome resulting from FEL's willingness to engage with the wider community. FEL identified a need for literacy and numeracy provision in West Auckland and sought a partner to offer such a programme. The links with the trust offer benefits not only to the two organisations but also to the learners of both. For example, a trip to the trust's marae is planned for FEL's staff and students.

Further evidence of FEL's willingness to engage with key stakeholders includes the surveys of parents of international students and agents who refer students to the organisation. These stakeholders generally show a level of satisfaction in the value of the education learners receive at FEL.

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**.

Context

The needs of the different groups of learners who enrol with FEL vary widely. International students have different pastoral care needs to those of the new-migrant, TEC-funded students, although internationals often have a higher level of English.

Explanation

FEL has a number of useful processes in place to ensure that learners' needs are understood and met. Every student is given a placement test on entry and that test determines the level of English course, from elementary to upper intermediate. Every week there are formative assessment events to gauge students' learning and every five weeks a summative assessment and one-to-one interview reassess learners' needs and development.

Staff are responsive to the different needs of the students. The TEC-funded students are taught in the same classes as internationals, although the latter are flagged for tutor reference. Often these students are older and living in stable family situations. However, they need support integrating into New Zealand society, often with dealing with members

of the community such as doctors or teachers at their children's school. The ability to deal with everyday texts was a student need identified by the Te Piataata Trust staff. The programme would like to introduce a second level to the delivery which focuses on everyday literacy and numeracy tasks.

The programmes are relevant to learners' needs. The General English programme is based on an international course, supplemented by the organisation's resources. A review of learner needs resulted in the introduction of two new components being taught, New Zealand heritage and core study skills. Resources are mostly effective, although difficulties are experienced by staff having to spend long periods photocopying. Students have expressed dissatisfaction with the facilities. Some of these issues appear to have been remedied and others are related to the rented premises.

A key stakeholder, TEC has the expectation that learners will be receiving numeracy instruction as part of their programme. The organisation recognises that it needs to build resources so that it can meet this need.

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 **Good**.

Context

Staff work across both organisations, QAG and FEL, and sometimes are unaware that two separate organisations exist.

Explanation

Good processes are in place to ensure the professional development and support of tutors. Particularly effective is the programme of peer observation and observation by the director of studies. Tutors reflected that this process, matching tutor needs and tutor strengths, was useful to their development. Tutors and managers are well qualified and some continue to study. Recently, two tutors from FEL and one from Te Piataata Trust attended training to complete the National Certificate in Adult Literacy Education (Vocational).

Small classes are a positive feature noted by students and tutors. Most classes comprise about 12 students and this allows each student to access the support of the tutor. Formative assessment is being used effectively to ensure that learners understand what their learning goals are and how well they are moving towards achieving them.

Regular reviews of the teaching programme have seen worthwhile improvements being made. For example, currently the teaching staff are working at developing tools that will ensure consistency of achievement standards across the different levels in the four aspects, reading and writing, speaking and listening. Pre-moderation is occurring, although it has been recognised that post-moderation practices could be improved.

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**.

Context

Management and teaching and support staff come from a range of nationalities which mirrors the student body, and this is useful in dealing with student pastoral care needs. Learners' attendance and progress is monitored closely by tutors and management. All learners are supplied with a handbook which gives them comprehensive guidance and advice about the school's processes and procedures and about where to access advice and support. FEL is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

Explanation

Learners at FEL are supported to achieve through careful monitoring of their attendance and progress. Small class sizes and regular feedback opportunities mean there are a lot of opportunities for learners to seek guidance. Marketing staff are approachable and deal with problems that arise for learners. There is good communication among the marketing staff, management, and teaching staff. This results in students' issues being dealt with quickly and effectively.

The goal to provide a korowai of manaakitanga (a "cloak of support"), underpins Te Piataata's assurance that learners are provided with holistic support. There is a wide age-range of learners who participate in the programme and this is utilised as a strength, engaging all learners across the generations to enable them to learn from each other.

Good feedback processes ensure that any issues that arise are identified. For example, students reported that earlier course schedules were too long, hence the change from a six-week to a five-week cycle. The success of this shift is currently still being reviewed.

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**.

Context

The governance and management for FEL is shared with QAG. The organisation is owned by the same entity and shares the same directors, directors of study, and managers.

Explanation

The goals of FEL are clearly defined. While some staff were unclear about the distinction between the two organisations, this lack of clarity was not evident at the management level.

Good relationships exist between key staff and management and all feel supported by the directors. Staff reported an open, collegial, democratic style of leadership which allowed

staff members to talk openly about any issues that arose. This is reflected in the largely stable workforce.

The roles and responsibilities for each key member of staff are clearly defined, and planning is in place to ensure the organisation can cope with unexpected events. More attention could be given to the induction process that is in place to settle in new staff.

FEL has actively sought relationships with other external organisations and has been successful in responding to community needs through its MOU with Te Piataata Trust. The mutually beneficial relationship with Te Piataata Trust is being strengthened by adding a member of that trust to the FEL advisory board. Pathway arrangements, including prior recognition of learning and cross-credits, exist with other tertiary organisations for FEL students.

There are purposeful attempts to engage with key stakeholders and to use new information to inform programme planning and design. For example, FEL surveys not only students but also parents and agents to assess its effectiveness.

The organisation recognises that more could be done to track the achievements and the value of the outcomes for its learners. Existing methods for collecting data could be utilised better and new methods could be sought to survey graduates.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

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

Recommendations

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

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