External Evaluation and Review Report

Aspire2 Education Limited

Date of report: 7 September 2023

About Aspire2 Education Limited

Aspire2 Education delivers programmes in information technology for international and domestic learners. The PTE is owned by Aspire2 International Ltd and is part of the Aspire2 Group of private training establishments.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Aspire2 Education Limited, 25 Federal Street, Auckland Central
Eligible to enrol intl students:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 348 (354 equivalent full-time learners); Māori 22, Pasifika 48, disabled 21
	International: six equivalent full-time students
Number of staff:	23 full-time, two part-time
TEO profile:	[Aspire2 Education Limited](#) (provider page on NZQA website)
	Foundation English became Aspire2 Education Limited in 2020 and ceased the delivery of English language programmes due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, Aspire2 Education began delivery of two information technology programmes at the Tāmaki Makaurau, Ōtautahi and Tauranga campuses. However, due to slow international uptake of the programmes, the Tauranga campus was closed in 2022 and the Ōtautahi campus is teaching out its current learners. The planned closure of the Ōtautahi campus will occur in August 2023.
Last EER outcome:	At the previous EER, conducted on 6 June 2018, NZQA was Confident in Foundation English's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	• New Zealand Diploma in Information Technology Technical Support (Level 5) (ID: 127073) (Ref: 2596-2)

- New Zealand Diploma in Systems Administration (Level 6) (ID: 127661) (Ref: 2601-2)

- International students; support and wellbeing

MoE number:	7491
NZQA reference:	C48852
Dates of EER Virtual visit:	13 and 14 June 2023

Summary of results

Aspire2 Education is providing comprehensive, real-world, practical training with valued outcomes and strong achievement. The training is supported by close tutor-learner relationships and relevant teaching and learning to match industry needs. Self-assessment processes are effective in providing valuable insights for continuous improvement of programmes and maintaining alignment with future industry and learner needs.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Overall student achievement is generally sound. Learners gain skills and knowledge and are well prepared for work. Highly individualised guidance leads to strong individual learner achievement and professional growth. Graduate outcomes are strong, and there is evidence that learners gain industry skills and knowledge that benefit and enhance their work and further study opportunities.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Aspire2 Education is well connected with the wider Aspire2 Group, government agencies and community leaders in order to be informed and to respond appropriately to industry and community needs. Information technology industry networks and cultural advisory engagement informs programme development and the implementation of a bicultural framework.

- The well-resourced and inclusive learning environment encourages learner engagement and exposes learners to industry-specific tools and software to enable them to be work-ready.

- Governance and management are highly supportive and innovative, with business decisions being well considered in a changing educational landscape. Clear guidance and support ensure the strategic direction and organisational goals to deliver quality education lead to employment opportunities for learners.

- A recent NZQA monitoring report for the level 5 diploma identified that, overall, there has been improvement since the monitoring in 2021.

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However, there are still areas that require strengthening, including the quality of assessor decisions and the authenticity of assessment scenarios. Formal staff development in adult teaching and assessment practices would be beneficial.

Key evaluation question findings[1]

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Overall course completions have remained consistent across the two years of delivery and exceed the Aspire2 Education internal target of 80 per cent (81 per cent in 2021 and 80 per cent in 2022).[2] Both the level 5 and level 6 programmes have reached the internal target. Qualification completion rates exceeded the Aspire2 Education internal target of 60 per cent in 2021, with an overall rate of 69 per cent (level 5, 69 per cent and level 6, 67 per cent). In 2022, there was a drop in the qualification completion rate, with the level 5 sitting at 53 per cent and the level 6 at 82 per cent. However, the results for 2022 are skewed by the inclusion of the previous year's cohort who were still completing their programme. Aspire2 Education understands that the reasons for non-completions and withdrawals relate to ongoing student personal commitments and financial hardships post-Covid-19. Aspire2 Education has identified a need for shorter courses, smaller programmes and more flexible and online delivery (evenings/weekends) to accommodate the students' need to work. Strategies are in place to check student intentions and capacity for study (at enrolment), and early support initiatives have been implemented to ensure student success. Aspire2 Education benchmarks against sector averages published in Nga Kete. Course completions exceed sector averages, and qualification completions remain higher or in line with sector averages. Māori and Pasifika learners made up 6.2 per cent and 13.6 per

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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] Refer Appendix 1, Tables 1 and 2.

	cent respectively of learner enrolments between 2021 and 2023.[3] Māori achievement is lower than the overall achievement rate and the sector average. Pasifika course completion rates are also below the overall rate, although above the sector average. Aspire2 Education is consulting with community groups and has developed a strategy to inform relevant and appropriate practice that better supports and serves Māori and Pasifika learners.

Twenty-one learners have self-identified as having a disability, although some have not disclosed the specifics of their disability. The course completion rate for the self-identified disabled learners is 65 per cent. Aspire2 Education has developed a strategy guided by the New Zealand Disability Strategy to ensure equitable outcomes can be achieved for all disabled learners. This strategy has been an effective start to building practice around the support for learners with diverse physical and learning needs.

Self-assessment is robust, using data extensively to understand learner outcomes and benchmarking them to make meaningful and ongoing improvements. |
| Conclusion: | Achievement is strong across programmes. Strategies for improving Māori and Pasifika achievement include input from relevant external stakeholders to inform appropriate teaching and learning practice. Outcomes from these initiatives are yet to be seen. Regular monitoring and understanding of learner outcomes supports ongoing improvements to educational performance. |

[3] Refer Appendix 1, Table 3.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	The learning outcomes are of high value to graduates and employers. Graduate survey information shows that of 93 responses, 56 per cent of graduates are employed.[4] Forty per cent of respondents have moved into further study and three level 6 graduates are pursuing degree programmes.

Learners acquire meaningful practical skills and knowledge. They develop their cognitive abilities and personal skills such as learning techniques, self-management and confidence in understanding information technology software, the terminology used in the industry, problem-solving, teamwork and project management.

Aspire2 Education programmes prepare learners well to undertake roles in the workplace, making them preferred candidates for some employers. The foundation skills also benefit learners in their homes and in supporting their families in technology use. The knowledge gained supports the learners' introduction to the information technology workforce and provides strong foundations for pathways into further study in information technology.

Stakeholders interviewed during the EER said Aspire2 Education graduates were well regarded for their professionalism, positive attitude and level of industry knowledge. This enables the graduates to start work and be productive from day one.

Aspire2 Education uses student feedback and consults with industry employers and community stakeholders to gain an understanding of industry and community needs to inform programme changes. Self-assessment could be strengthened by reciprocal engagement, building more meaningful, lasting relationships with industry stakeholders. Sharing Aspire2 Education's successes with stakeholders would help validate their input and give respect and acknowledgement to the work |

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[4] Fifty per cent of those working are in intermediate-level roles and 96 per cent are in full-time employment.

	they were willing to share with the organisation.
Conclusion:	Comprehensive reporting shows that learners are gaining strong outcomes. Graduates are also gaining relevant employment or accessing higher-level programmes. Stakeholders contribute to and strengthen programme design and delivery. Self-assessment would benefit from more focused stakeholder relationship-building.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	The current delivery of two recently approved information technology programmes was a consequence of ongoing industry consultation and input from NZQA, the Tertiary Education Commission and the workforce development council. This led to identifying gaps in digital skills and a significant amount of programme development to respond appropriately to industry and learner needs. Experienced industry experts and key academic staff provided input for appropriate programme design and industry content.

Aspire2 Education regularly reviews its programmes and learner feedback. The PTE collates and analyses the feedback to gain valuable information for understanding learner needs and addressing areas for improvement. Processes for regular reporting to senior management and the board are appropriate and ensure decision-making is linked to an understanding of educational performance. An example of this is the extensive work done to reduce the number of further evidence requests in competency assessments.

Purposeful alignment of theory and practical components underpins an effective teaching and learning strategy. This is designed to expose learners to a variety of practical projects and scenarios and use the tools and software applications to simulate industry-related outcomes.

Tutors use their industry connections and networks at expos and conferences to keep updated on the latest technology and industry shifts, and this helps improve their practice and sector |

	knowledge.
	Aspire2 Education has invested considerably in internal staff training to improve assessment practice. This followed some variable performance in NZQA moderation for the level 5 programme. Recent follow-up moderation identified improvements since the monitoring of 2021, but there are still areas that require strengthening, including the quality of assessor decisions and the authenticity of assessment scenarios. While tutors receive internal targeted training, capability in assessment and moderation practice could be strengthened with prioritised formal adult teacher training. Ongoing programme review and internal and external moderation inform improvements.
Conclusion:	Aspire2 Education has made significant changes to its programmes and has strong programme review processes to understand the effectiveness of the educational performance in meeting stakeholder needs. Continued focus on developing staff will support performance in assessment and moderation practice.

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learning support starts with a well-defined enrolment process which provides Aspire2 Education with information about individuals' learning needs. The PTE informs the learners about the programme and learning expectations to increase their awareness of the commitment needed. Their preparedness for study is also assessed.
	Tutor engagement and teaching and learning systems are effective. Tutors provide prompt online responses and one-on-one support to learner queries. Learners said they received constructive feedback on assessment, in a timely manner. The feedback they receive from tutors helps them improve on their assessment tasks and project work. Learners are fully aware of academic expectations around assessment, with systems to ensure the integrity of assessment. In planning for the development in the digital world, management has begun

	discussions on the use of ChatGPT.
	The PTE provides additional support to learners with wellbeing or learning challenges. Learners with such challenges are offered other options to study, and individual learning plans provide additional guidance for learners to achieve outcomes under the guidance and support of the tutorial team.
	The learning environment is planned and structured, with weekly lesson plans to schedule activities and ensure required content is covered. Learning and teaching includes multiple activities that engage different learner types, including group work, discussion groups, one-to-one sessions, workbooks and online engagement. Effective online and technology resources such as laptops are accessible to enable the different modes of teaching. Student-directed learning is guided with relevant resources which learners can access in their own time.
	A disability strategy and a plan for Māori and Pasifika engagement are a response to the specific needs of priority learners. Biculturalism is embedded across the PTE, and staff engage in training to support their understanding and practice.
	A comprehensive review of the Code of Practice 2021 has informed changes, and five key objectives are used to measure learner support, such as the first impressions survey and exit surveys which align to student support objectives. Agent networks are working well to support potential international learners.
	Aspire2 Education uses a range of methods to collect learner feedback and identify ways to improve learner support through effective self-assessment processes.
Conclusion:	Regular and ongoing performance reporting leads to continuous improvement.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Comprehensive environmental scanning and planning for change has seen Aspire2 Education adapt its provision to meet needs such as the shift from English language education to information technology. The recent closing of two locations to ensure the continued strength of the organisation was a well-informed decision. This is evidence of the organisation's agility. Governance and management have a strong purpose and clear direction, with a focus on learner outcomes. Aspire2 Education consults widely to inform strategic planning and is highly effective in monitoring educational outcomes. The PTE is managed and operated under Aspire2 International's shared services model. Monthly management meetings include the chief executive reporting to the Aspire2 International board. Leadership is shared throughout the organisation, with collective responsibility for decision-making and implementing organisational goals. Communication is effective and enables management to respond to both internal and external stakeholders' needs. The PTE's commitment to diversity is led by the chief executive and includes a bicultural framework. Three mātapono (te ao Māori values: whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, kotahitanga) were adopted to support the commitment to biculturalism and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The PTE is reviewing its courses to ensure the inclusion of appropriate Māori and Pasifika content. As this focus continues, there is an opportunity to develop stronger reciprocal relationships with regional iwi and members of Pasifika communities. Employing a dedicated cultural advisor/support person would provide the necessary support for Māori and Pasifika learners. The academic leadership is well supported and enhanced by senior staff and the learning and development team. Aspire2 Education is sufficiently resourced to provide learners with a wide range of industry-related learning experiences. Academic staff are appropriately qualified, with a focus on continuous development to maintain industry currency. Further development

	in adult teaching and assessment practices will support staff in dealing with diverse learner needs and will improve assessment and internal moderation practices.
	Aspire2 Education has well-documented processes for regularly gathering and reviewing information. There is a good level of information-sharing and reflection at all levels and a clear focus on improving outcomes. At the operational level, the organisation would benefit from building mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships to support ongoing engagement and continuous improvement.
Conclusion:	A strategic and innovative governance and management team supports the highly qualified and experienced teaching team to ensure learner goals are met. Some internal academic processes need strengthening to ensure consistency of academic practice.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	The Aspire2 Education management team works collaboratively to meet compliance requirements. The PTE has generally strong processes to manage its key compliance accountabilities including:
	• Programmes are being delivered in line with programme approval documents and ensure consistency with NZQA Rules. NZQA monitoring in 2021 and 2023 of the level 5 programme identified some assessment variability which Aspire2 Education has reviewed and made some improvements. Aspire2 Education continues to support academic staff to achieve appropriate outcomes.
	• Programme review for the Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Transformation in Business (Level 8)[5] and Graduate Diploma in Applied Management (Level 7) is ongoing. Aspire2 Education is working with NZQA to meet the stipulated programme approval and accreditation

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[5] Programme approved with requirements to be met prior to commencement.

	requirements.
	• Self-review against the Code of Practice 2021 is comprehensive. Staff are well informed about the Code, and student support and wellbeing is managed effectively.
	• All NZQA attestations and fit and proper person declarations are up to date.
Conclusion:	Aspire2 Education is effectively managing key areas of compliance.

Focus areas

This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.

2.1 New Zealand Diploma in Information Technology Technical Support (Level 5); and New Zealand Diploma in Systems Administration (Level 6)

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**

2.2 International students; support and wellbeing

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that Aspire2 Education Limited consider:

- programme review and planning are undertaken, with realistic timelines and appropriate implementation as per approval and accreditation requirements.

- developing mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders, especially Māori and Pasifika, to foster respect and acknowledgement of expertise shared.

- development of academic staff to ensure teaching practice is aligned to best practice for working with diverse student groups with diverse learning needs.

- strengthening tutor capability in assessment practice and monitoring internal and external moderation processes to ensure outcomes are valid and good practices are being embedded.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

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

Appendix 1

Table 1. Aspire2 Education course completions

	2021		2022	
Overall	81.21%	562/692	80.32%	649/808
NZ Dip in Information Technology L5	80.43%	518/644	79.15%	467/590
NZ Dip in Systems Administration L6	91.67%	44/48	83.49%	182/218

Table 2. Aspire2 Education qualification completions

	2021		2022	
Overall	69.01%	49/71	58.43	97/166
NZ Dip in Information Technology L5	69.23%	45/65	53.62	74/138
NZ Dip in Systems Administration L6	66.67%	4/6	82.14	23/28

Table 3. Aspire2 Education Māori and Pasifika learner course completion rates

	Aspire2 Education	Sector	Difference
Māori learners	67.95%	74.9%	-6.95%
Pasifika learners	75.93%	74.1%	+1.8%

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud[6]*

- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*

- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

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[6] NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

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Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*

- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*

- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, training schemes and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021. 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). All rules cited above are available at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/.

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