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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Ignite Colleges Ltd

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 19 September 2017

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Final Report

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:	Ignite Colleges Ltd (Ignite); formally known as Corporate Academy Group.
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	9 July 2002
Location:	98 Kerrs Road, Wiri, Manukau
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Certificate in Security (Level 2)• National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 3)• New Zealand Certificate in Hospitality (Level 3)• New Zealand Certificate in Hospitality (Level 4)• New Zealand Certificate in Health and Wellbeing (Level 2)• New Zealand Certificate in International Freight Logistics (Level 3)• New Zealand Certificate in Study and Career Preparation (Level 3)• Certificate in Health Care Assistant (Level 4)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	144 domestic students; 30 per cent Māori and 47 per cent Pasifika

	No international students
Number of staff:	22 full-time, two part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	Refer: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/details.do?d-5425-o=1&providerId=750247001&d-5425-s=1
Distinctive characteristics:	Ignite offers entry-level programmes to tertiary study. Often this involves engaging learners whose needs have not been well met in previous education settings such as schools.
Recent significant changes:	Ignite had a change of ownership on 1 July 2016. The new owners have reviewed all aspects of provision and have re-orientated the programme offer with a stronger focus on hospitality, and have exited Automotive/Motor Industry programmes.
Previous quality assurance history:	The last external evaluation and review of Ignite Colleges in 2013 was Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review was:

- Governance, management and strategy
- Hospitality provision
- Health and wellbeing provision.

This selection ensured coverage of key areas of provision offered by Ignite.

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.

The evaluation team consisted of two evaluators. The team visited Ignite on 20 and 21 June 2017.

Interviews (in person, groups, or via telephone) were held with:

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- The directors and other managers
- Academic staff in focus area programmes
- Organisational support staff and academic administration staff
- Learner groupings in focus area programmes
- Stakeholders in focus area programmes, and wider community stakeholders

During the site visit, Ignite provided the evaluation team with a range of operational documentation, including planning materials, management meeting minutes, quality management policies, enrolment information and policies, and course design, delivery and assessment materials. This documentation complemented the self-assessment information that had been submitted prior to the site visit. The evaluators undertook a sample review of all materials tabled.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance and in capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Ignite Colleges** for the following key reasons:

- Ignite is focused on student achievement outcomes, including both formal qualification attainment and more generic work-readiness and social development competencies for its learners, and this focus leads to good student achievement outcomes in most instances.
- Well designed and comprehensive self-assessment practices and tools have now been implemented to monitor and improve student outcomes; and are well used and understood throughout the organisation.
- Ignite actively engages with sector and community stakeholders to improve provision and outcomes for learners.
- From January 2017 onwards, programme design and delivery is well matched with the needs of learners as the primary stakeholders.
- A suitably experienced, skilled and engaged teaching team is focused on ensuring positive outcomes for their learners.
- Fair, valid and transparent assessment processes are in place.
- The physical learning environment is of high quality.
- Ignite now has in place clear systems to manage programme compliance and tertiary education sector policy requirements more broadly.

Supplementary comments

Most learners at Ignite are completing their courses and qualifications successfully. They are acquiring useful skills and knowledge that develop their social wellbeing and cognitive abilities.

The qualifications and competencies gained are relevant to employment opportunities, and programmes offered are well matched with industry needs.

Since July 2016, Ignite has refreshed its programme offer. There is good evidence that programme design and delivery is now well matched with the needs of learners. Both learning materials and physical resources are of high quality.

Staff have appropriate sector experience and are skilled educators. In addition, individual student support tools are in place to identify the unique learning styles of students and to match provision with individual student learning goals.

Ignite ensures its provision is well matched with the cultural and wider wellbeing needs of its predominantly Māori and Pasifika student body. Students, graduates, community stakeholders and employers all say that Ignite fosters an inclusive learning environment centred on student success.

Accordingly, this evaluation finds clear and comprehensive evidence that Ignite is meeting the needs of its learners and other stakeholders, without any significant gaps or weaknesses.

Educational performance is supported and maintained by comprehensive self-reflective practices led by senior management and operating throughout the organisation. In all key areas – such as student outcomes, programme design, and compliance – Ignite demonstrates robust self-assessment that has included renewing programmes, revamping the college premises, and addressing past compliance issues. Ignite has demonstrated that self-assessment has been used insightfully to make comprehensive improvements to programme delivery and educational outcomes.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do students 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 **Excellent**.

In evaluating how well learners achieve, this evaluation has taken into consideration the extent to which learners complete their studies, acquire useful skills and knowledge (developing their cognitive abilities), and improve their overall wellbeing with enhanced abilities and attributes.

Educational attainments, useful skills and wellbeing

Tables 1 and 2 show course and qualification completions data since 2013. The tables show mainly positive outcomes – with the 2013-2016 course completion average being 85 per cent, and the 2013-2016 qualification completion being 80 per cent. However, in some years outcomes for Māori and Pasifika learners have been, on average, markedly lower than other learner groups at Ignite (despite the high proportion of enrolments from these two population groups).

Table 1. Ignite Colleges – course completions data

	2013	2014	2015	2016
No. of students	220	230	185	165
All students	89%	86%	85%	77%
Māori learners	87%	73%	90%	78%
Pasifika learners	92%	83%	76%	85%

Table 2. Ignite Colleges – qualification completions data

	2013	2014	2015	2016
No. of students	220	230	185	165
All students	89%	83%	75%	70%
Māori learners	87%	63%	89%	56%
Pasifika learners	90%	100%	45%	74%

From mid-2016 onwards, Ignite has been developing and offered (from 2017 onwards) a revised new mix of educational provision, with new programmes and/or significantly revised programmes. This limits the applicability of some quantitative

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

data analysis. However, Ignite has now set an internal target of 85 per cent successful completion across all of its courses and student groups. A managerial dashboard and e-tracking system captures assessment results and is used by management to monitor progress towards achieving this target. This information is also used to inform student-focused fortnightly conversations between the academic management team and tutors, allowing for further self-reflection and improved classroom delivery.

The Ignite management team has also, within their reflective practices, identified past disparities in student outcomes between Māori and other learners, and has undertaken a parity review to better ensure equivalent outcomes across student cohorts going forward. This has resulted in changes, both to the mix of provision (such as the discontinuation of some courses) and in delivery methods to increase relevance to learners. In addition, Ignite undertakes a sector benchmarking exercise to assess its results against other, similar education providers to inform itself on performance matters. This data shows that learning outcomes exceed sector averages.

Course and qualification outcomes data is consistent with the views of learners and graduates, who considered that Ignite had helped them improve their work-readiness and personal confidence. This also aligned with programme evaluation data gathered from all students at the end of each learning module (every five weeks). Ignite also formally tracks the extent to which 'soft skills' have improved for students during the course of their study. Their evaluative summary in this area for 2016 indicates that over 90 per cent of the student body self-assessed that their programme of study assisted students to improve their skills in communication, information technology, teamwork and time management.

Accordingly this evaluation finds that:

- Ignite is focused on student achievement, including both formal qualification attainment and more generic work-readiness and social development competencies for its learners, and this focus leads to good student achievement outcomes in most instances
- the intensity of the focus on learner outcomes is relatively new, emerging from management changes enacted from mid-2016 onward, and therefore learner achievement outcomes have not been demonstrated to be consistently high for the full period reviewed (2013 onwards)
- well-designed and comprehensive self-assessment practices and tools have now been implemented to monitor and improve student outcomes; and are well used and understood throughout the organisation.

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

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

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

In evaluating the value of outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners, this evaluation has taken into consideration the quality of learning and how Ignite engages with communities and identifies relevant stakeholder groups.

Ignite identified learners and their families as its core stakeholder grouping. Accordingly, evidence and findings articulated in Findings 1.1 are applicable, namely that students and graduates interviewed indicated they valued the learning outcomes they gained at Ignite. A number of Youth Guarantee learners said their programme of study had been life-changing, as they felt their previous educational experiences (typically in schools) had not meet their needs.

Ignite management has systematically gathered student destination and outcomes data (i.e. how many graduates carry on with study in other educational contexts, and/or gain employment). A sample of this data for a focus area class centred on hospitality showed that most learners go on to further study, which is a desired outcome from that programme.² Overall 2016 data shows that 67 per cent of graduates go on to work (either full or part-time), and 7 per cent undertake further study elsewhere. A new position was established in 2017 to support students to prepare and transition to employment, and Ignite hopes this will further improve outcomes.

Supporting evidence for the positive educational setting at Ignite was also submitted by community stakeholders identified by Ignite. Evidence was given to show how Ignite incorporates stakeholder needs identified through support workers in both the youth justice and broader education sectors. Māori and Pasifika representation was also included within this grouping. Ignite has also established a relationship with a Māori advisor. At the time of the evaluation, the scope of this role was still emerging, although some direct tautoko (support) in the form of presentations had already been offered to learners by this advisor.

A third group of stakeholders identified by Ignite was employers. For this evaluation, employers from both the hospitality and health sectors said they found Ignite services to be professional and in keeping with industry standards. From their perspective, Ignite was meeting their expectations in regards to the work-readiness expectations of graduates.

² Ten of 15 learners. Percentages not given as the sample is too small for meaningful comparison.

To maintain stakeholder input, Ignite uses a range of stakeholder engagement processes, including advisory groups and individual site visits. Advisory group meetings are formally recorded to allow timely input into programme design. A representative from the health and wellbeing sector, for example, noted the promptness with which Ignite responded to an important issue in their industry by including course content examples that raised student awareness around hospital care and infection control.

A fourth stakeholder grouping is the wider tertiary education sector. Managers from Ignite have been actively involved in sector organisations and policy advisory work with agencies to strengthen their knowledge and contribution to tertiary education. There is also an informal but active relationship with a local polytechnic.

Accordingly, from the information presented this evaluation finds that:

- learners and graduates – as the key stakeholder group – gain value from the programmes offered by Ignite
- Ignite actively engages with sector and community stakeholders to improve provision and outcomes for learners
- reflective practices (such as surveying graduates and advisory groups) are used to improve stakeholder engagement and ensure consistent stakeholder input into delivery.

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

In evaluating the matching of programmes and activities with the needs of learners and stakeholders, this evaluation has taken into consideration the extent of ongoing needs analysis, the maintaining of relevance, developments in subject content, the incorporation of relevant teaching practice and technologies, and the adequacy and appropriateness of resources.

In 2016, Ignite reviewed its entire portfolio of programmes and submitted new and renewed programme approval documents to NZQA (which were granted). This process has ensured full delivery of all programme components and an appropriate mix of theory and practical learning that better meets the needs of the community. Accordingly, Ignite programmes considered within this evaluation have a clear structure, which is demonstrated within course outlines and associated student materials. Ignite's suite of programmes are designed to enable learners to

progress to higher-level qualifications, especially those learners who complete with a level 2 qualification. This aligns with the vision and the five values of Ignite, which aim to help learners to fulfil their potential ('dream big').

Programme resources were also renewed by staff, and the materials sampled for this evaluation were comprehensive, with clear module and teaching plans and included student self-directed learning components. These changes, resulting from internal self-assessment, mean that learning is now considered more relevant to students, and the five-weekly components are considered 'right-sized' for the learners.

Accordingly, from the information presented this evaluation finds that:

- from January 2017 onwards, programme design and delivery is well matched with the needs of learners as the primary stakeholders
- from January 2017 onwards, learning resources are well designed and appropriate for the programmes reviewed.

Ignite teaching staff interviewed for this evaluation had appropriate qualifications and sector experience for their areas of delivery. Peer teaching is being used, and a developmental programme was in place for a new teaching staff member. Students said that as well as teaching staff having good sector and subject knowledge, their teachers could clearly explain the subject matter and maintain a friendly and inclusive style, allowing for positive learning experiences.

Assessment materials used are relevant to the programmes, and staff were able to outline appropriate types of assessment methodologies for the programmes offered. Ignite undertakes pre- and post-moderation of assessments. Teaching staff are aware of the value of these processes to improve delivery practice. There are no moderation issues arising, with one external moderation body noting Ignite's assessment material as 'exemplary'. Classrooms are well organised with suitable resources. The maximum teacher-student ratio was reported to be 1:25.

Accordingly, from the information presented this evaluation finds:

- good evidence of a suitably experienced, skilled and engaged teaching team who are focused on ensuring positive outcomes for their learners
- evidence of fair, valid and transparent assessment processes in place.

Ignite has also significantly invested in renovating its physical premises to better meet the needs of learners. It has invested in a new tutor hub, computers on wheels, and upgraded its WiFi so it is accessible to all tutors and students. It has a new (licensed) student learning café, and new barista and bar learning areas. Ignite is building a commercial kitchen and new classrooms to accommodate a projected growth in students. The licensed café allows hospitality students very useful 'real-world' learning opportunities on a regular basis. For health and

wellbeing students, a mock 'rest home room' with appropriate resources (e.g. hoist and hospital bedding) is also in place, so that learners can practise core skills (for example move a person out of a bed).

Field trips and guest speakers are incorporated into programmes to broaden student understandings. The health and wellbeing courses (level 3 and 4) also have a practicum component. Stakeholders felt the practicums were well organised by Ignite staff, students were well presented and arrived on site with sufficient knowledge and skills to enable them to complete their on-job tasks safely.

Accordingly, from the information presented this evaluation finds that:

- the physical learning environment is of high quality
- self-assessment processes are being used to improve programme design and delivery.

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

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 evaluating how well learners are supported and involved in their learning, this evaluation has taken into consideration whether learners are provided with comprehensive and timely study information, continued support appropriate to their needs, an inclusive learning environment, and minimal barriers to learning.

As referenced in Findings 1.3, Ignite has a strong educational staffing base. Supplementing this team is a small student support services team who are assigned to engaging with the community, managing the enrolment process, and providing pastoral care that supports the holistic wellbeing of the students. Ignite has taken a deliberate approach of recruiting individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds into this team, to best reflect the range of learners at Ignite. Where required, this team liaises with academic staff to address any concerns raised by the learners.

Students set their own initial learning goals on commencement, which are tracked by themselves and appropriate teaching staff during their course of study. A learning style diagnostic tool (VARK)³ is also used on enrolment so that learners and tutors are aware of individual learning styles. Students are provided with

³ VARK = visual, aural, reading/writing and kinesthetic. Refer <http://vark-learn.com/> for further details.

comprehensive information about the nature of their studies (and assessments) at the commencement of programmes.

Ignite also has a Māori advisor and is conscious of the need to support its Māori learners in particular (given past outcome disparities). To this end, Ignite draws upon the Whare Tapa Whā holistic model of health and learning, and tukana/teina (experienced/inexperienced mentoring) support approaches.⁴ These methods were able to be articulated by teaching and managerial staff from diverse cultural backgrounds, and the evaluation team notes alignment with Ignite's Treaty of Waitangi policy statement.

Ignite also has a Pasifika responsiveness statement, and again believes holistic support is a key to ensuring wellbeing and educational success. Activities and the physical environment are designed to be inclusive of Pasifika cultures.

For all learners, attendance is monitored and any absences followed up to better ensure student engagement. A student class representative and council system ensures Ignite management receives regular feedback from students on both academic and broad organisational matters. This is used to inform practice, with written evidence being presented to demonstrate the impact of academic matters such as content delivery.

There is awareness within Ignite of non-educational barriers to learning that some students face. Ignite was able to demonstrate how they monitor and respond to welfare matters in the student management system. Ignite has established relationships with social organisations in South Auckland who they refer students to, including budgeting services, sex education services and youth mentoring. Social services are also invited to present to students on recurring issues during inductions, for example smoking cessation and sex education. At the time of the evaluation, Ignite was yet to fully identify what type of external social services might be required on a periodic basis to support students and address non-classroom barriers to learning.

Accordingly, from the information presented the evaluation team finds that:

- students are supported and involved in their learning

⁴ This Māori philosophy towards health is based on a wellness or holistic health model, seeing health as a four-sided concept representing four basic beliefs of life: Te Taha Hinengaro (psychological health), Te Taha Wairua (spiritual health), Te Taha Tinana (physical health), Te Taha Whānau (family health). The Whare Tapa Whā can be applied to any health issue affecting Māori from physical to psychological wellbeing.

- Ignite has generally self-reflected on what type of support its learners require while at Ignite, and how this can best be delivered in the cultural context of its student body.

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

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

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

This evaluation has considered how well managers and governors respond to change, use results of self-assessment for improvements, have a clear organisational purpose, balance innovation and continuity, provide effective leadership, allocate resources, ensure policies are legal and ethical, and value staffing contributions.

For this evaluation, Ignite management tabled a PowerPoint setting out educational goals, with an associated set of five educational values. During interviews the managers and teaching staff were consistently able to articulate how this planning had been drawn upon to improve practices and processes. In particular, Ignite has a philosophy of believing in the potential of learners, regardless of past educational outcomes.

Ignite also has clear business management planning materials and quality management documentation to guide its operations. Policies in key areas, such as student fee refunds, academic fraud prevention and student complaints are in place. Management meetings are held, and associated reports are orientated around student outcomes and demonstrate reflective practice.

Ignite has a broad management team of four people, which includes clearly defined roles focused on quality management, student support, curriculum and delivery, regulatory compliance and financial control. Ignite staff report that they feel valued and supported in their roles. Professional development is available for staff which helps ensure they are up to date with educational best practice.

Accordingly, from the information presented the evaluation finds:

- governance and management is effective in supporting educational achievement
- the management team at Ignite is fully engaged in continuous self-assessment.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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 **Excellent**.

This evaluation has considered how well staff, particularly key managers, manage important compliance and accountability matters.

For this key evaluation question, the evaluation team asked sample questions in three areas with specific compliance requirements: tertiary education policy settings, health and safety, and employment matters.

In relation to tertiary education policy settings, the Tertiary Education Commission audited Ignite in 2016.⁵ Twelve compliance issues were identified, resulting in Ignite developing an action plan to resolve these matters. In December 2016, the commission advised that a refund would be required for two past invalid enrolments which occurred in 2015 (under different management), but that they were satisfied that all recommendations made had now been actioned by Ignite, and the audit was therefore closed. Ignite also advised NZQA of concerns arising at this time relating to programme delivery matters, and outlined how it was resolving past non-compliance. For this evaluation, Ignite provided evidential data demonstrating how it now ensured full compliance with the requirements of all programme components for every programmes it offers.

At the time of the evaluation there were no current tertiary education policy compliance matters arising. The managing director also attested that there were no legal or ethical matters arising that NZQA ought to be made aware of.

In relation to health and safety, Ignite was able to demonstrate its health and safety policy and associated procedures. This included an up-to-date risk registry. There were no matters arising.

In relation to employment, Ignite advised that all staff have employment contracts, and that they have moved tuition staff onto permanent contracts to ensure greater organisational stability (and better conditions for staff). There are no staff grievances, and as noted in Findings 1.5, staff feel valued and supported in their roles.

⁵ The audit was based on 2015 and 2016 provision.

The evaluation finds that:

- Ignite now has in place clear systems to manage programme compliance and tertiary education sector policy requirements more broadly
- Ignite had a previously serious compliance error relevant to the period of this review, but the matter has now been addressed and there are no current concerns
- Ignite has in place clear systems to manage its compliance and accountability responsibilities outside of tertiary education policy areas, with robust self-reflective evidence for sample areas selected for this evaluation.

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 **Excellent**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Hospitality provision

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: Health and wellbeing provision

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Ignite Colleges continue to review and identify external social services that might be required on a regular basis to support students to address non-classroom barriers to learning.

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).

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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