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External Evaluation and Review Report

EF International Language Schools
Limited

Date of report: 26 November 2020

About EF International Language Schools Limited

EF International is part of an international group of English language schools. EF International (Auckland) provides English language learning to a solely international student body who wish to study abroad and immerse themselves in new cultures.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	56 Fort Street, Auckland
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: nil International: 1088 (across a whole year) 13 equivalent full-time students at the time of the EER visit
Number of staff:	Five full-time equivalents at the time of the EER visit ¹
TEO profile:	NZQA – EF International Language Schools
Last EER outcome:	Highly Confident/Confident
Scope of evaluation:	NZQA-approved training scheme: General English (Beginners Academic Proficiency) (Level 3); and International Students: Support and Wellbeing
MoE number:	7560
NZQA reference:	C41489
Dates of EER visit:	23-25 June 2020

¹ At the beginning of 2020, staff numbers were 16 full-time equivalents and 15 part-time. The current smaller number of full-time staff was explained as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown and the seasonal cycle (winter). Additional teachers and support staff are usually employed as the summer season approaches.

Summary of Results

EF International provides comprehensive, informed support and promptly meets students' learning needs, enabling high student achievement. There is a strong focus on the student experience which promotes regular review of practices throughout the organisation. Documented stakeholder evaluations and evidence of a complete self-assessment cycle would strengthen the self-review processes EF International regularly undertakes.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Student attendance and achievement are high irrespective of the length of the study period. Additionally, staff have a strong understanding of what constitutes student achievement and use this to better meet the students' needs. Consideration of contributing factors to limited or non-achievement would complement this understanding.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Student achievement is comprehensively monitored, and feedback is regularly discussed at all staff levels. This ensures that informed, timely and relevant academic and pastoral support is provided to the students.
- There are open communication channels between EF International and stakeholders. Formal documentation of conversations and/or feedback mechanisms are not used with any stakeholders other than students.
- Programme design, delivery and maintenance is completed annually by head office. Templates and programme structures are also provided to support locally designed programmes. Subsequent review and maintenance of these local programmes occurs as required.
- The frequency of moderation depends on the programme. Academic staff could benefit from professional development in assessment and moderation.
- Regular self-review meetings, observations and

appraisals maintain strong practices and inform professional development for the whole organisation.

- Regular compliance accountabilities are managed and mechanisms to improve this management are being developed.

Key evaluation question findings²

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Student achievement at EF International is measured through proficiency in language and progress towards personal learning goals. Student achievement is high. Currently, 100 per cent of students are achieving progress in their chosen study.</p> <p>Staff understand why some students show limited or slow achievement of their learning goals. Documented analysis of the quantitative data relating to long-term student achievement, identifying related trends and actions, would strengthen self-assessment.</p> <p>Students' needs and goals are determined on arrival. Student progress is monitored through regular assessments and one-to-one meetings between the tutor and student.³ Adjustments are then made to realign the teaching with students' goals.</p> <p>Student feedback is gathered using surveys that indicate high levels of overall satisfaction with the language programme. This is further supported by conversational feedback from current students and graduates.</p>
Conclusion:	Achievement is very high, as measured by regular testing, review meetings and feedback. Analysis of achievement data and recognition of patterns occurring within achievement levels would strengthen self-assessment.

² The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

³ Needs assessment meetings between tutor and student occur every fourth week of each six-week course cycle. Small classes also enable organic monitoring of student needs.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>EF International monitors and evaluates the progress of the students but does not formally consult with the school's other stakeholders such as homestay families and employers. The students value their improved English for work and/or study and being totally immersed in a different culture and country. This is achieved through the general programme, the special interest (SPIN) choices made available every 12 weeks, the monthly activities, and the interest clubs and mentor networks available throughout the school. Student and graduate feedback shows that these activities encourage student engagement, positive wellbeing and realising the value for this primary stakeholder.</p> <p>Additional value is provided through engagement with the organisation's other stakeholders. This enables the students to practise their English and for stakeholders to maintain and monitor students' wellbeing. The open communication between EF International and these stakeholders also enables the organisation to make positive changes for the students. This indicates positive, mutually beneficial relationships. However, these stakeholder interactions are anecdotal and not formally documented. Likewise, feedback mechanisms are not used with stakeholders other than students.</p> <p>A small number of students have undertaken other studies in New Zealand to enable them to move to higher-level study with a connected PTE. Information on the destinations of the other students is collected by the international body, but the New Zealand school has not requested this information. An understanding of these outcomes would strengthen the organisation's self-assessment.</p>
Conclusion:	The student-focussed practices of EF International ensure regular opportunities for students to gain their valued outcomes. How this is affected by interactions with other stakeholders is understood but not captured. Likewise, information about the use of the acquired skills and knowledge for further study was not available in New Zealand.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The General English training scheme is developed, resourced and regularly reviewed by an international development team through consultation and the feedback provided from the regular progress assessment results and annual visits to the various schools.</p> <p>Annual reviews have resulted in a robust programme structure designed to be delivered throughout the world. It also allows for each student's starting skills, underlying needs and learning speed. Local maintenance occurs through regular academic self-review meetings. These identify areas for improvement and create action plans which are then discussed with management prior to inclusion. Noting the impacts of these actions would complete the cycle of self-assessment practice for EF International.</p> <p>Students' needs and goals are determined by an EF International centrally designed proficiency assessment (EFSET) prior to or on arrival. Monitoring and adjustment is then completed through a comprehensive set of assessment tasks and face-to-face meetings. EFSET gives the student feedback that directly relates to areas of improvement and continued need. Additionally, the PTE moderates assessor judgements throughout the programme.</p> <p>Individual interests are accommodated through daily SPIN classes. A limited number of these are locally designed and developed by academic staff. Pre-moderation is completed by academic management to ensure the material produced meets the learning outcomes as well as the standards of a centrally produced programme. The post-use review and maintenance of these local programmes and assessments occurs through the use of observations by management and blind marking. A schedule and systematic documentation of findings (pre- and post-) would strengthen this area of review.</p>

Conclusion:	A robust, regularly reviewed, centralised programme ensures the flexibility to meet students' needs. Annual review ensures the continued engagement of students. Local verification of assessment tasks and assessor judgements does not appear to be a regularly occurring activity.
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1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students applying to study in New Zealand are assisted comprehensively through their local EF International sales office. Recently updated information⁴ about studying in New Zealand and regular contact with the New Zealand school ensures students are well informed before arrival.</p> <p>On arrival, the students undergo a needs and goals assessment⁵ individually with their tutor. A higher-level student mentor is assigned for support purposes (including interpretation where necessary). Later, each student is placed in a mentor group. This support network supplements the regular testing of proficiency, meetings with the tutor, and small class sizes. This ensures that all students are monitored closely and both academic and wellbeing needs are recognised early and appropriate responses are timely.</p> <p>Students' experiences prior to, on arrival and during their studies are regularly monitored through scheduled and randomised (mini) student satisfaction surveys. These are collected, analysed and discussed quarterly with the regional office, enabling change around wellbeing support at multiple levels.</p> <p>Student activities form a core component for EF International. Each student is placed in a mentor group with students from</p>

⁴ Recent evaluations alerted EF International (New Zealand) to incorrect information being provided by overseas sales offices. The New Zealand school now regularly contacts all of the offices to ensure they have updated information.

⁵ After evaluations showed that students rated their personal language improvement as low, the PTE created an introductory video and a postcard-writing exercise to capture their language capabilities on arrival. Each student views these resources at the end of their programme to measure their progress.

	other countries and undertakes small activities with this group fortnightly. The organisation schedules whole-school activities and interest-related clubs, enabling the students to establish beneficial networks and skills.
Conclusion:	A comprehensive system of monitoring and support ensures the students experience holistic support and inclusion around their learning journey.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Overall, the operation of EF International follows a proven, effective strategic plan which is monitored closely across all parts of the organisation. Currently students wishing to study at any EF International school are enrolled at the international company's online schools, meaning the New Zealand school has only retained those students choosing to remain until they graduate. This has resulted in a reduction in staff. Beyond this, the New Zealand school aims to hibernate till 2021, buoyed by the knowledge that there has been significant interest shown for study in New Zealand as soon as restrictions are lifted.</p> <p>Generally, the purpose, direction, policies and procedures of EF International are set by the international head office and monitored closely at regional levels to ensure consistency. The international organisation's quality procedures are known by the New Zealand school, but the underlying policies were not readily available due to their location at the head office.</p> <p>Regular meetings review the information being gathered through the student surveys and observations of teaching practice. The findings and actions are outlined through an administrative roadmap and academic self-review meeting minutes. As mentioned in 1.3, identification of the impacts of the proposed actions would strengthen and complete the current self-review</p>

	<p>cycle.</p> <p>The academic staff employed are appropriately qualified.⁶ Comprehensive support and development is accomplished through a rigorous ‘onboarding’ procedure, mentoring lasting a minimum of six weeks, six-monthly peer and management observations, annual performance appraisals and fortnightly academic meetings. Staff have regular professional development in English language teaching. Development in general adult teaching and learning pedagogy and techniques could widen tutorial staff understanding of less specialised teaching activity such as moderation.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>As an international company, EF International develops strategic plans and management procedures centrally, providing each school with a practised operational framework to follow. Quality assurance is based on standardised practice. Professional development in general adult teaching and assessment practices could enable the PTE to employ alternative approaches where needed.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Currently, regular compliance accountabilities are managed through the upcoming submission reminders provided by NZQA. The new school director is developing a schedule of important dates as an additional management tool. The effectiveness of this measure is still to be demonstrated.</p> <p>EF International undertakes regular self-review of its Code of Practice accountabilities. This has enabled the PTE to respond promptly and comprehensively when international student issues have arisen. Planned use of the NZQA self-review report template as a guide will develop current review practice further.</p> <p>EF International also volunteered for monitoring by the NZQA International Code team. The report highlighted some historical</p>

⁶ English New Zealand defines, for member schools, the minimum qualification requirements for academic staff.

	<p>compliance concerns, which have now been addressed.</p> <p>The recommendations made by the 2018 English New Zealand audit have also been fully addressed. As with the Code of practice self-review, EF International's recent use of the audit report template for in-house self-review will aid in continued accountability management .</p> <p>The accreditation status of two training schemes⁷ held by EF International has lapsed. Evidence has been supplied showing EF International does not deliver these programmes. NZQA will complete any outstanding processes to update the statuses.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>EF International has undergone a number of reviews since the last EER. The recommendations raised have been addressed and further mechanisms for managing these accountabilities have been developed. The effectiveness of these measures are still to be demonstrated.</p>

⁷ English for Tertiary Study (Level 4) and IELTS Preparation (Level 3)

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: General English (Beginners - Academic Proficiency) (Level 3)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good

2.2 Focus area: International Student: Support and Wellbeing

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good

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 EF International Language Schools Limited:

- Retain a copy of relevant policies and procedures that EF International uses throughout daily operations to enable the New Zealand school to monitor and review their practice separate from the international body.
- Create document feedback mechanisms for all stakeholders to better enable an understanding of the value of the outcomes for these groups.
- Enable provision of professional development for tutorial staff in adult teaching and learning-related programme and assessment design and moderation practices. This is to enable the development of these practices within the EF International review processes.
- Document the impact of the actions planned and any further activity to show completion of the PTE's self-assessment cycle.

Requirements

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

Appendix

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 fraud⁸*
- *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.*

⁸ 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.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

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 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, 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 2016. 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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