

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Concordia Institute of Business Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 10 February 2015

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MoE Number: 7664
NZQA Reference: C16564
Dates of EER visit: 4-7 November 2014

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Concordia Institute of Business Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Ntec Tower, 20 Hobson Street, Auckland
Delivery sites:	(In addition to the location above): Durham Court, 146 Durham Street, Tauranga
First registered:	2 July 2004
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diploma in Commerce (Level 5)• Diploma of Business Management (Level 5)• Diploma of Business Management (Advanced) (Level 6)• Diploma in Business Management (with Specialisations) (Level 7)• Diploma in Business Accounting (Level 7)• Certificate in University Preparation for International Students (Level 3)• General English (Level 3)• General English + Academic English (Level 3)• General English + IELTS Preparation (Level 4)
Code of Practice signatory?	Yes – for learners 18 years of age and above; also for learners 14 to 17 years of age

Number of students:	International: 756
Number of staff:	148 (employed by and shared across Ntec)
Scope of active accreditation:	(In addition to courses currently delivered): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate in International Business (Foundation Studies) (Level 3) • Certificate in Business Administration for International Students (Level 3) • Certificate in Business Administration for International Students (Level 4) • New Zealand Diploma in Business (Level 6) • Business English (Level 4) • Certificate in English (Specific Purposes) (Level 4) • Certificate in ESOL (Levels 1-4) • New Zealand Certificate in English (Levels 1-4) • TESOL (Level 4)
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Concordia is one of the five private training establishments under Ntec (Ntec Tertiary Group, a consortium of education providers).</p> <p>Ntec operates a shared services structure across the group for its support services, such as finance, administration, student support, marketing and quality assurance.</p> <p>Ntec academic staff are centrally employed and teach across the various institutes under the group.</p> <p>All learners are international students.</p> <p>Major learner ethnicities: Indian (61 per cent); Philippines (7 per cent); Korean, Sri Lankan and Nepalese (4 per cent each).</p> <p>Gender: 72 per cent male; 28 per cent female.</p>
Recent significant changes:	Concordia has undertaken a number of restructures to facilitate greater assimilation and to incorporate the shared services structure of Ntec.

The number of learners increased from 264 in 2011 to 351 in 2012; 676 in 2013, and 756 as at 1 July 2014.

Ntec centralised its Auckland presence from two locations to its current premises and is about to expand into other buildings immediately surrounding 20 Hobson Street.

Concordia commenced delivery in the level 7 diplomas in business management and accounting.

Concordia has a partnership agreement with the University of Northampton, whereby learners can elect to complete further studies beyond the Diploma in Business Management (Level 7) and be awarded with two qualifications, one from New Zealand and one from Great Britain.

Previous quality assurance history: The previous external evaluation and review (EER) of Concordia was conducted in 2011. NZQA was Highly Confident in both Concordia's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

NZQA conducted a validation visit in 2013. No concerns were identified from the visit.

Other: Concordia currently receives no funding from any government agencies.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of this EER included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management and strategy
- International students

Other focus areas selected were:

- Diploma of Business Management (Level 5)

This programme was one of the focus areas in the previous EER and continues to have a reasonably large number of learners enrolled (252 learners out of 756 – 33 per cent of the current roll).

- Diploma in Business Management (with Specialisations) (Level 7)

This is a new programme since the previous EER and has a large number of learners enrolled (300 learners out of 756 – 40 per cent of current roll).

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- General English and IELTS Preparation (Level 4)

As 121 learners (16 per cent of current roll) were studying English with Concordia at the time of the EER, the evaluation team chose one of the English courses outside the Business programmes to explore the operation of the English department.

Given the now seamless integration of shared services across Ntec, all parties agreed during the on-site visit that, inevitably, aspects of this EER may encroach into parts of operations beyond Concordia.

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.

Self-assessment materials were delivered to NZQA in a timely fashion to inform the scoping of this EER.

The evaluation team comprised two evaluators and an observer from within NZQA. (The observer was present for professional development.) The on-site visit at Ntec Tower, 20 Hobson Street, Auckland lasted three days (split over two full days and two half-days).

The evaluation team did not visit the Tauranga site as NZQA was advised that Concordia will cease delivery in Tauranga by mid-2015 (when all current learners in Tauranga are expected to complete their programmes). That site will then be taken over by other institutes under Ntec.

The evaluation team interviewed the four directors, the chief executive officer and his executive assistant (who is also the administration manager), the academic and quality assurance director, the director of studies, the head and deputy head of the Business faculty, 11 tutors and 23 learners from the Business faculty, the head of the English faculty, three English teachers, six English learners, the careers manager, the international market director and one marketing staff member, and one external advisor on visit from the United Kingdom. A range of materials and records were reviewed.

The evaluation team invited Concordia to submit supplementary evidence at the end of the on-site visit on agent management, graduation destination analysis, and understanding and matching needs for the Diploma in Business Management (with Specialisations) programme. These were duly supplied and this report reflects findings incorporating the supplementary submissions.

Summary of Results

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

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Concordia Institute of Business Limited**.

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Concordia Institute of Business Limited**.

- Concordia's achievement rates are outstanding and clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of its seamless, integrated support mechanisms. Assessment and moderation practices are strong, validating the high achievement rates (see Findings 1.1).
- Concordia understands and matches the needs of all stakeholders very well (see Findings 1.3).
- As a result of such understanding, outcomes of high value are generated to learners, employers and communities (see Findings 1.2).
- Staff are highly qualified academically. Many possess adult education qualifications. A range of mechanisms are in place to monitor and continuously enhance teaching effectiveness (see Findings 1.4).
- Concordia has in place a range of full and comprehensive services to support its international learners academically and on pastoral matters, ensuring individual successes are not hindered by any personal issues (see Findings 1.5).
- Governance and management is very strong. A clear direction is articulated. Positioning of Concordia is well defined and understood within the organisation. Despite it now being a very large organisation, internal communication remains highly effective (see Findings 1.6).
- Overall, the evaluation team found Concordia to be a highly reflective, genuine organisation with a social conscience. The reflective culture is well-embedded across all levels within the organisation. Valuable data is collected with specific purposes, with analysis consistently produced to support performance monitoring and to inform decision-making. This demonstrates to the evaluation team a strong internal ability to self-identify and respond to any gaps in an efficient manner, as well as the authenticity of the self-assessment systems in place (see Findings 1.2 and 1.6).
- Use of graduate destination data could be further strengthened, but this does not diminish in any way the excellent self-assessment processes in place (see Findings 1.2 and Recommendations).

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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**.

Learner achievement is outstanding in all aspects. Achievements are thoroughly validated through very strong internal and external moderation systems. Table 1 illustrates the consistently high completion rates across all focus area programmes at Concordia, which are highly favourable when benchmarked against publicly available statistics (such as the educational performance indicators published by the Tertiary Education Commission).

Table 1. Programme completion rates at Concordia, 2012-2014 to date			
Qualification	2012	2013	2014 to date*
Diploma in Business Management (Level 5)	95%	97%	93%
Diploma in Business Management (with Specialisations) (Level 7)	-	97%	92%
General English + IELTS Preparation (Level 4)	98%	98%	97%
* The 2014 academic year was still in progress at time of compiling the report – rates are subject to change. Data supplied by Concordia; table designed by NZQA for illustration purposes.			

Learners on the Business programmes improve self-confidence, acquire practical, applied skills that are relevant to the current domestic industry and market demand. Concordia's philosophy, of aiming to add value to businesses and employers via its graduates, is noted by the evaluation team. In 2013, 94 per cent of graduates from the Diploma in Business Management (with Specialisations) programme obtained relevant employment upon graduation.

English learners enrol for a period of 17 weeks on average. Eighty-six per cent of learners progress one step in their level of English within 10 to 11 weeks, with 95 per cent of learners progressing at least one step within 16 weeks. In 2012, 13 per cent of English graduates progressed to a higher level of studies in a different subject area within Ntec.² That rate increased to 15 per cent in 2013. These figures

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 Concordia understands that about 25 per cent of its English learners enrol with the intention to progress to a higher level of studies, either within Ntec or elsewhere.

illustrate excellent academic performance by the English department as well as the learners' vote of confidence in Ntec (by choosing to continue their studies within the group).

There is clear evidence that the processes in operation within Concordia and the wider Ntec group contribute to learner achievement. For example, the admission process ensures learners are enrolled into programmes at the correct level; and regular assessments and feedback provide learners and tutors with information on learning effectiveness, allowing efforts and support to be targeted to areas of need.

Concordia operates a range of self-assessment activities to monitor and track learner achievement and progress effectively. Completion and employment outcome rates are reported quarterly by each department to governance and management. The Business department benchmarks its performance against publicly available statistics. The English department also uses progression, retention and extension of study rates, as well as a comprehensive set of spreadsheets, for self-assessment.

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 **Excellent**.

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

Outcomes for learners, employers and communities are of high value. Business learners appreciate the opportunity to gain two qualifications (one from New Zealand, one from Great Britain) through Concordia's new pathway partnership with the University of Northampton. English learners improve on their level of English, and also enhance their knowledge of all cultures (including New Zealand culture) during their studies at Concordia.

An employment outcome is desired by learners and this is potentially facilitated through completing a qualification at Concordia. Evidence clearly shows that the level of relevant employment upon graduation from the Business programmes is sustained over the years. Anecdotal evidence suggests that employers rate Concordia's graduates highly. Interviews with learners and tutors, and records from learner evaluation showed learners acquire employment attributes such as skills in communications, customer service and teamwork. Some learners have the opportunity to apply such skills in their part-time job during their studies.

Concordia operates a range of effective graduate tracking mechanisms, both formal and informal, to collect destination outcomes data. Concordia also gauges employer satisfaction levels periodically. The evaluation team acknowledges the practices in place but believes more systematic analysis can be conducted on graduate outcomes to further inform governance and management on the value of outcomes (see Recommendations).

Concordia (and the wider Ntec group) is an education provider with a social conscience. Scholarships are offered to the disadvantaged in Vietnam and the Kingdom of Lesotho. The evaluation team heard verified individual stories of Vietnamese learners who were previously 'shoe-shine kids' and were offered full scholarships to study in New Zealand, purely out of the generosity of the directors. Out of the four scholarships offered to disadvantaged Vietnamese, one continues studying in Concordia and is a promising learner, while three others have graduated since, with one staying in New Zealand and two returning to Vietnam, contributing to their local communities.

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 **Excellent**.

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

Concordia understands market demand very well. Practical, applied programmes and activities are pitched to meet the market and learner needs, both in employment and in higher levels of study. For example, learners on the Diploma of Business Management programme are offered opportunities to establish and foster networks with potential employers, enhancing future employment opportunities. The Diploma in Business Management (with Specialisations) programme requires prospective learners to be business graduates, with the intent to add value through the programme by converting to employment-oriented, skills-based learning (which is different to a focus on learning theories as in some tertiary studies overseas).

The English department demonstrates very strong understanding of learners' study motives – 75 per cent of its learners study English for work, career, social or travel purposes, while 25 per cent aim to progress to higher levels of study, either within Concordia or with another tertiary education organisation. Such understanding is gained by the head of department meeting every new learner individually at enrolment and sharing the findings with English teachers during weekly meetings. The placement tests also ask learners their study objectives. The English department always follows up on graduates' performance in their higher levels of study if the graduate has progressed to another programme within Ntec.

Concordia administers the English language proficiency requirements responsibly. Twenty per cent of learners in Concordia's Business programmes are admitted through official IELTS (International English Language Testing System) results; 65 per cent are admitted through an internal English language proficiency test; and 15 per cent by demonstrating English as the teaching medium during a secondary level of education – Concordia only accepts such evidence from a refined list of locations to ensure authenticity and quality. This has been considered as best practice by the authorities (NZQA and Immigration New Zealand). Internal English language proficiency tests are conducted stringently. An internet video link is used to verify

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identity, and all tests are marked exclusively by the English department. Such measures were implemented on identifying a handful of learners (out of hundreds) that did not possess an adequate level of English despite passing the internal English language proficiency test, then administered by agents – an example of highly effective self-assessment. The evaluation team is very satisfied that the enrolment and admission processes match the needs of learners to the programmes.

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 **Excellent**.

Teaching is very effective at Concordia. There is clear evidence that the teaching staff are very energetic, passionate in their academic areas, reflective in their practices, and constantly seeking feedback to improve teaching practices. All academic staff are well qualified in their subject expertise, with most equipped with an appropriate adult education qualification. The remainder are all currently financially supported to acquire such training. A range of professional development sessions is offered, with recent topics such as cultural awareness and teaching techniques. Performance appraisals are conducted systematically, with regular informal discussions in support. Findings from learner evaluations on teaching effectiveness, methodology and curriculum are shared both at departmental and individual staff levels. Lesson plans are collaboratively revised based on a range of feedback mechanisms (as described above).

Concordia is doing its very best to ensure teaching is based on how individuals best acquire knowledge and skills according to their preferred learning style. For example, a variety of teaching and assessment methods are used by the Business department: case studies, presentations, portfolio development under the Massey Business Enterprise Centre partnership.³ In the English department, a number of textbooks are used and alternated, and a diverse range of electives is offered for the afternoon session (such as intensive grammar and speaking classes). Small class sizes (an average of 20 to 25 for the Business department; an average of 12 to 15 for the English department) ensure individual attention and assistance is provided to learners.

As noted under Findings 1.1, moderation practice is robust in Concordia, which validates its achievement rates. Assessment materials are pre-assessment moderated internally. Post-assessment moderation is conducted internally for all

³ The Massey Business Enterprise Centre partnership is a joint venture between Ntec and Massey University's enterprise centre (ecentre.org.nz). This initiative creates opportunities for level 7 learners to develop entrepreneurship skills via brainstorming, exploring, validating and market testing business opportunities under guidance and supervision.

assessments by sampling. External moderation is conducted using the expertise of a credible organisation (for the Business department) or an experienced advisor (for the English department).

Concordia recently came under some capacity pressure due to unexpected growth (as a result of favourable practice changes by Immigration New Zealand). This issue has been self-identified and solutions have been put in place. For example, more administrative staff are employed to relieve the paperwork of the Business tutors; and more English teachers have been hired to split some classes to maintain a small class size and ensure an effective learning environment for General English courses. These are just two of many examples the evaluation team noted in Concordia's highly effective self-assessment under this key evaluation question.

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 **Excellent**.

Concordia (and the wider Ntec group) clearly demonstrates a 'wrap-around' learner support and guidance service with no gaps that would potentially fail learners – problems are identified before they become significant issues. For example, attendance is closely monitored and any absences are followed up efficiently on a daily basis. Support mechanisms are tailored to the needs of international learners, ensuring individual success is not hindered by any personal issues. For example, counselling services by qualified counsellors are offered. Information is exchanged between support and academic staff within privacy parameters. Such processes contribute to the very high achievement rates.

Concordia is compliant with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code). Agents are managed effectively. The institute runs an orientation programme which involves a number of external agencies, such as the New Zealand Police, to ensure learners newly arriving in the country are well settled. Being a member of one of the largest groups in New Zealand private tertiary education, Concordia enjoys an economy of scale and is able to offer a range of services beyond the minimum expectations of the Code. For example, an on-site café (operated by the Hospitality department of Ntec) offering discounted food and coffee is praised by many learners; free accommodation of up to a fortnight is offered to new arrivals.

Concordia demonstrates its innovative flair in learner support and guidance. A professional skills development module offered to all new learners spans three weeks before commencement of the enrolled programme. The module encompasses necessary study skills for tertiary education, understanding of individual learning styles, New Zealand culture and Auckland familiarisation, as well as providing an opportunity for learners to connect socially. The module is

commended by learners for both its academic and pastoral aspects – many reported they were able to make friends across Ntec, forming study groups, support groups and flatting groups.

1.6 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**.

The evaluation team is impressed with Concordia's highly effective governance and management (and accordingly, aspects of Ntec's governance and management that is associated with Concordia's operations). Despite now being a very large tertiary education group, governance and management is well informed and fully aware of all aspects of the organisation's operations, with a strong focus on outcomes, as well as understanding and meeting stakeholders' needs. Positioning and branding of different institutes under Ntec is purposeful. There is a clear five-year Ntec strategic plan and an annual Concordia business plan. A communication strategy is in place across Ntec, informing all staff of changes and improvements in a very dynamic environment. All staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities, and feel respected, valued and their opinions heard – turnover is low, especially in the English department. Staff are entrusted and departments are delegated with autonomy in budgeting and staffing decisions. The evaluation team observed a very efficient and productive management team, with members possessing complementary skills, working towards a common goal with learners' best interests at heart. The overall structure and practice is coherent and ensures any gaps in operations can be identified and responded to at the earliest opportunity.

Notwithstanding very strong internal capabilities, Ntec/Concordia continues to engage external advisory personnel. For the Business department, employers are represented to ensure ongoing industry linkages are maintained as well as to contribute to periodic programme reviews. For the English department, experts are engaged and are heavily involved in ongoing curriculum and assessment development. A variety of external relationships with authorities and many other organisations are maintained to keep abreast of the environment Concordia operates in.

Concordia is a highly reflective organisation which operates a range of very effective, authentic self-assessments. Such a culture is fully embedded across the whole organisation at all levels. Concordia is willing to take risks and is prepared to admit and learn from its mistakes. Some examples over the years were openly shared with the evaluation team, which demonstrates a culture of continuous improvement. The evaluation team commends such an approach and, as a result of such openness, gained further confidence in the organisation's capability in self-assessment.

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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: International students

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Diploma of Business Management (Level 5)

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

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

2.4 Focus area: Diploma in Business Management (with Specialisations) (Level 7)

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

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

The evaluation team believes there is room for improvement in the use of graduate destination data. By performing deeper analysis, the value of outcomes can be further evidenced and the overall self-assessment for this programme can be enhanced further (see Recommendations).

2.5 Focus area: General English + IELTS Preparation (Level 4)

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Concordia Institute of Business Limited:

- Further enhance the level of analysis using the graduate destination data already collected. An example would be finding a systematic way to collate the employment level of graduates of the Diploma in Business Management (with Specialisations), in order to assist analysis of the relevance of the course of study to employment, to further evidence the value of outcomes (perhaps even in monetary value), and to inform ongoing programme review.
- Consider aspects where the English department may be able to share some of its best practice in self-assessment with the Business department.

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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