



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report

Auckland Rugby Union Incorporated

Date of report: 6 November 2025

About Auckland Rugby Union Incorporated

As part of its mission of 'a better Auckland built by rugby', the Auckland Rugby Union Incorporated (ARU) provides the fees-free, one-year, full-time Pro Sport Career programme for sports-minded school leavers. The programme is niche. It includes three NZQA-approved level 3 sport and recreation qualifications, as well as additional New Zealand Rugby certification. Students have access to ARU operations and sports facilities.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 6 North Stand, Gate B, Walters Road, Eden Park, Auckland
Eligible to enrol international students:	No
Number of students:	22 current domestic students: Pasifika 17 (77 per cent), Māori two (9 per cent), disabled nil
Number of staff:	One full-time equivalent manager and 2 x 0.75 full-time equivalent staff
TEO profile:	Auckland Rugby Union Incorporated
Last EER outcome:	The outcome of the last EER in 2023 was Not Yet Confident for educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	<p>The EER focused on the Pro Sport Career programme incorporating the NZQA-approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand Certificate in Sport, Exercise and Leisure Operations (Level 3) (128501-1)• New Zealand Certificate in Sport Officiating (Level 3) (128603-1)• New Zealand Certificate in Sport Coaching (Level 3) (128604-1)
MoE number:	7703
NZQA reference:	C64524
Dates of EER visit:	26-28 August 2025

Summary of results

The Pro Sport Career programme is of high value and is contributing to important student outcomes. Notable improvements have been made since the last EER. However, there are some core gaps in managing compliance accountabilities.

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

- The important needs of learners are well met. Effective initiatives and activities remove barriers to participation and learning and motivate achievement.
- Generous and increased ARU resourcing, and effective processes, are contributing to valued outcomes. The programme provides numerous, relevant learning and personal development opportunities. These contribute significantly to student aspirations, growth and achievement.

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

- The PTE demonstrated valuable and improved review and oversight of student achievement, and examples of improved outcomes due to effective self-assessment. Some key improvements have been made in managing key compliance accountabilities since the last EER.
- Several key areas of weakness in policy, process and understanding continue to hinder the effective self-identification and management of some core educational compliance requirements. Some of these gaps persist from previous external evaluation and review. Overall, this has impacted the level of confidence NZQA has in the PTE's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students, predominantly Pasifika², have achieved well in 2025, with 97 per cent of the unit standards sat so far successfully achieved. The achievement of credits is a significant gain for some of the students who left school with low credit attainment. ARU's detailed unit standard completion data shows that this is an improvement on 2023 and 2024 results (Appendix 1 shows achievement data over time). Results are validated by regular internal post-moderation and positive external moderation results.</p> <p>Retention has also improved in 2025 (88 per cent compared with 62 per cent in 2024³). This correlates with new pre-enrolment processes attracting students more likely to complete the programme, and improved student attendance, which has been a focus for the PTE.</p> <p>Of the 16 students who completed the programme in 2024 (out of 26 who enrolled), 10 gained an NZQA level 3 qualification – most gaining two or three qualifications. All 16 students also completed the ARU Pro Sport Career education programme and World Rugby Coach Accreditation (Level 1).</p> <p>Further self-assessment analysis might assist with strategies to encourage and support students to gain all three qualifications. In addition, deeper analysis of the needs of students who leave the programme early could add insights about students' support and learning needs.</p>

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 In 2025, 80 per cent of students enrolled are Pasifika: 13 Samoan, four Tongan, three Cook Islander.

³ In 2024, 10 of 26 students left the programme early. Seven of these students left to take up employment or other study.

	<p>Through the programme, the students grow important attributes and skills including confidence, leadership, professional relationship management, public speaking, teamwork and self-management. It would be valuable for the PTE to track students' growth in such qualities.</p> <p>Since the last EER, the PTE has developed insightful achievement reports (each term and annually) which the leadership team is engaging with.</p> <p>It is unclear why the PTE's course and qualification completion results differ from data reported by the TEC.⁴ The PTE should investigate this discrepancy.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Completion results are improving each year, and notably in 2025. Students achieve valuable knowledge, skills and attributes, and grow significantly through the programme. Self-assessment is generally effective.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The Pro Sport Career programme provides students with access to multiple opportunities and valued outcomes. Students gain extensive real-world knowledge and experience, and qualifications across different components of sport (event management, coaching, officiating).</p> <p>With full access to ARU facilities, events, personnel and support, including internal programmes and professionals, students grow their understanding of what is possible and become clearer on their learning and career pathways and how these can be achieved. They are supported by the professional networks they develop through the ARU. As such, they complete the programme well prepared and confident to progress to relevant next-level study and employment.</p> <p>Graduates and a few students spoken with for the EER described having not been ready for higher study after leaving school due to low confidence and low credits.</p>

⁴ Tertiary Education Commission.

	<p>However, because of the programme, they had or were now planning to enrol in a level 5 sports-related university diploma. The graduates enrolled in the university diploma are excelling. This shows the important societal value of the programme, and particularly for those students who left school without NCEA⁵ or a learning and career pathway, and with low confidence.</p> <p>The programme is of high value to the ARU. The fees-free programme, and positive student outcomes, are contributing to its mission of a 'better Auckland built by rugby'. The integration of student learning with ARU events – and through coaching and officiating at schools and clubs – supports the ARU brand and ARU's hosting capacity as part of these activities. In this way, schools and clubs also benefit from the contribution of the students.</p> <p>The PTE collects generic graduation destination data, tracking students in study and employment. For 2024, this shows such outcomes for 11 of the 16 students who completed the programme. However, the data does not depict the other excellent known outcomes students achieve, in terms of their personal growth and aspirations, the nature of their subsequent endeavours, and how the programme has prepared them for their pathways.</p> <p>Since the last EER, the PTE has implemented an internal stakeholder survey. This asks relevant questions about the contribution of the programme to student outcomes. A survey or other process for proactively obtaining and documenting external stakeholder feedback is yet to be developed, which could contribute useful insights.</p>
Conclusion:	The programme contributes highly valued outcomes for students and key stakeholders. Self-assessment data provides some, but not a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes achieved.

⁵ National Certificate of Educational Achievement.

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>Students' learning needs are well supported by the three different but interrelated NZQA programmes and qualifications, the array of additional learning experiences and certifications, and the students' immersion in diverse, relevant, real-world learning experiences.</p> <p>Practical learning activities within this context, including guidance to students from different ARU professionals, are highly relevant and contribute importantly to student outcomes. These professionals provide ongoing feedback to both learners and programme personnel, contributing relevant insights to support learning and programme review. Overall, programme delivery is well executed and informed by ARU stakeholders.</p> <p>The programme effectively balances theoretical and practical learning. Classroom-based learning activities are tailored to students' preferred learning styles and to support collaborative peer learning. The students are encouraged to bring their own interests and experiences into the learning. Reflective practice is a key component, enhancing knowledge acquisition.</p> <p>The academic quality of the programme has improved since the last EER. The 2024 NZQA approval of new programmes has ensured the currency of the programme. In 2024, NZQA confirmed that ARU had addressed gaps previously identified through NZQA monitoring. The PTE has met NZQA and workforce development council external post-moderation requirements. ARU also undertakes regular internal post-assessment moderation – though the documentation of activity and outcomes could be improved.</p> <p>The programme is sufficiently reviewed through ongoing stakeholder feedback, management and staff meetings, and review of achievement information. Tutors encourage student feedback on their learning and the programme, and students complete an end-of-year survey.</p>

	There is potential to better document stakeholder feedback and establish an external stakeholder feedback process. Implementing a systematic mid-year student feedback process could provide actionable insights within the same academic year. Incorporating the resulting findings into current annual achievement reports – alongside moderation insights and findings from internal analysis and review – would strengthen the comprehensiveness of annual and year-to-year programme review.
Conclusion:	The programme is highly valuable and relevant. It strongly matches students' and key stakeholder needs. Self-assessment insights are sufficient to support effective self-review, but processes could be strengthened.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Learning activities and opportunities are motivating and support learning well. The PTE has effectively implemented initiatives to reduce barriers to attendance and learning.</p> <p>Through increased resourcing introduced since the last EER, the PTE now has a more effective process to engage with schools, students and their whānau about the programme and expectations pre-enrolment. The PTE also reviews information about students' previous learning, pastoral and behavioural needs, and past records of achievement to gauge potential learning needs. This has led to increased and more diverse interest, students better suited for the programme, and improved achievement results in 2025.</p> <p>These are valuable developments as it is not clear how well the PTE could support students who emerge with specific or significant learning challenges. There is an opportunity for the PTE to add to its learning resources to respond to students with different learning needs and challenges (including low literacy, neurodiversity).</p> <p>Programme and teaching staff are caring and responsive. Students participating in the EER highly rated the support</p>

	<p>that they receive. This includes food, transport, mentoring, counselling and wellbeing support.</p> <p>Students are well prepared for and closely supervised and supported when participating in external learning activities. The PTE monitors and manages the extent of the practical activities the students undertake. This should be an important ongoing focus to prevent overload given the many different external activities and events that they participate in.</p> <p>Students receive regular feedback on their learning and progress, including through one-on-one verbal feedback, their logbooks and reports each term.</p> <p>There is a need to improve the documentary information provided to the students. The student handbook is not fit for purpose and conveys some inaccurate information. The website conveys little information about the programme.</p> <p>Unlike at the last EER, the PTE has completed a self-review of the Code of Practice⁶ and insightfully identified improvement actions in 2024. However, these actions have yet to be progressed. In some areas, information to students expected by the Code is not sufficient. Examples include the complaints process and definitions for and information about annual critical incidents and complaints.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Effective care, support and guidance is provided to the students. Self-assessment and increased resourcing have led to some improved processes. Information to students is an area that needs to be addressed.</p>

⁶ The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>ARU is effective in supporting educational achievement. It sufficiently funds the programme to provide fees-free learning and numerous opportunities, initiatives, resources and facilities to support student learning, growth and achievement. Student success is valued and recognised, including by end-of-year student awards for achievement.</p> <p>Governance and management have responded to gaps and issues identified at the last EER. Increased staff resourcing has enabled improved processes, contributing to improved outcomes. Staff have completed professional development to support moderation and assessment (with further learning planned in 2026). The leadership team has a stronger understanding and oversight of achievement. As identified in 1.3, the programme was rewritten to address previous gaps identified, and gaps found with moderation have been addressed.</p> <p>Oversight of the quality of educational compliance accountabilities continues to be insufficient. The EER has identified gaps in the meeting of some core requirements (outlined in 1.6) as well as instances where information has not been incorporated within documentation as expected by recent external reviews. This reflects potential capability and capacity limitations that have not been self-identified. For example, there are gaps in understanding some of the key accountabilities and/or how these are to be met, a lack of shared understanding and responsibility, insufficiently defined procedures, and seemingly insufficient time, space and support to ensure that this area is strengthened.</p> <p>The PTE's various documentation (quality assurance manual, student handbook and website information) has inconsistencies and some out-of-date and inaccurate information. The quality assurance manual and handbook are not 'user-friendly' and do not well articulate key procedures. There appears to be insufficient time and space for creating quality, relevant documents.</p>

Conclusion:	Governance and management effectively resource and support educational achievement. However, oversight and support to effectively manage compliance is insufficient.
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1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The PTE has addressed some key gaps in the management of educational compliance accountabilities since the last EER. It has established an internal moderation process and met external moderation requirements in 2024 and 2025. It has completed a self-review of the Code of Practice to identify some valuable improvements (though not yet actioned). The PTE is delivering current programmes and qualifications. Annual review of the currency of unit standards is now undertaken.</p> <p>In 2024, a TEC audit identified no non-compliances and that systems, processes and practices were acceptable, with minor nonconformities.</p> <p>However, there continues to be some core educational compliance accountabilities that are yet to be effectively managed. This seems to be due to insufficient understanding of expectations and a related gap in understanding and articulating practical processes to ensure requirements are met.</p> <p>Despite it being a specific requirement of the last EER, the PTE has, until 2025, been significantly remiss and late in the timely reporting of student results to NZQA. This has not been intentional, but rather occurred due to a lack of understanding of correct reporting procedures. This meant that 2023 and 2024 graduates did not have their results reported until 2025. This only came to the PTE's attention when graduates sought to enrol in further study. While the PTE advises that it has now, retrospectively, reported outstanding results, and is regularly reporting results in a timely fashion, it has still to define its standard process for results reporting. Timeframes for doing so, as currently outlined in the organisation's quality assurance manual and student handbook, are inconsistent.</p>

	The PTE was late submitting its 2025 annual fee form to NZQA. Some easily incorporated information updates to student information recommended by the TEC and NZQA have yet to be made.
Conclusion:	The PTE has demonstrated much work and improvements in ensuring the effective management of some key compliance activities. At the same time, there remain core areas where the PTE is not meeting expected requirements.

Focus areas

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

2.1 Auckland Rugby Union Pro Sport Career programme incorporating three NZQA-approved level 3 programmes: New Zealand Certificate in Sport, Exercise, and Leisure Operations (128501-1), New Zealand Certificate in Sport Officiating (128603-1), New Zealand Certificate in Sport Coaching (128604-1)

Performance:	Good
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 Auckland Rugby Union Incorporated:

Key evaluation question 1.1

- Engage with the TEC to understand why TEC course and qualification completion data differs from the PTE's achievement data.
- Deepen self-assessment analysis to identify potential strategies to support student completion of all three NZQA programme qualifications. Better review the learning needs and challenges of students who leave the programme early.
- Actively track, and incorporate in achievement information, students' growth in skills and attributes from the start to end of the programme.

Key evaluation question 1.2

- Add greater depth to graduate destination information to better demonstrate student outcomes and the contribution of the programme to student pathways.

Key evaluation question 1.3

- Document internal moderation activity and results.
- Implement a systematic, mid-year student feedback process.
- Establish an external stakeholder feedback process.
- Build on existing strong annual reporting on achievement by incorporating additional self-assessment insights about programme performance that are not currently presented in reporting.

Key evaluation question 1.4

- Consider developing a condensed handbook or information series for students that summarises key information about the programme, including about the NZQA level 3 qualifications, and what is needed to achieve all three qualifications.
- Action improvements self-identified in the 2024 Code of Practice self-review.
- Look to increase the learning resources available to support diverse learning challenges.

Key evaluation questions findings 1.5 and 1.6

- Review capability, capacity and resourcing to ensure:
 - comprehensive understanding of all educational compliance activities and related processes to support their completion
 - that processes for meeting key educational compliance accountabilities are fully, consistently and practically described in internal documentation (and specifically the quality assurance manual)
 - shared responsibility and oversight to support the meeting of key educational compliance accountabilities and expectations.
- Review and revise the PTE's quality assurance manual, student handbook and website information, to ensure that these are fit for purpose and that information is consistent, accurate, current and complete. Ensure that information recommended by the 2024 TEC audit and NZQA monitoring are included.

Key evaluation question 1.6

- Introduce a process to sample student records of achievement and/or an internal audit to ensure timely, ongoing reporting of student credits (and within this, a process to check that first aid credits are being reported by external providers for Pro Sport students).

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.

NZQA requires New Zealand Rugby Union Incorporated to:

- Review The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 and NZQA guidance to ensure that all requirements relating to complaints and critical incidents are being met. This includes clauses 13(a-h), which outlines expectations for informing and engaging with learners around complaints processes, along with clause 13(f) and clause 10(3)(g), which set out the requirements for the recording, and publication of complaints and critical incidents data.

Appendix 1

Table 1. PTE internal achievement data

	2023	2024	2025 (mid-year)
Student retention	11/14 students: 79%	16/26 students: 62%	22/25 students: 88%
Attendance	Half-year: 77.1%	Half-year: 69.5% (annual 70%)	Half-year: 84.4%
Course completions	All courses offered: 50% All courses sat: 66%	All courses offered: 72% All courses sat: 89%	97%
Qualification completions	-	Of all students enrolled: 10/26 - 38% Of all students completed: <u>10⁷/16</u> 63%	-

Table 2. TEC completions data (%)

	2023	2024
Course completions	39%	55%
Qualification completions	0%	0%

⁷ Five students completed all three NZQA qualifications, four students completed two qualifications, and one student completed one qualification.

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 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 2022, 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 excluding universities, and*
- maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 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, micro-credentials 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 2022. 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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