



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Communications International
Education Limited
Trading as Tasman International
Academies

Date of report: 13 April 2010

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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.

Brief description of TEO

Location: Levels 6 and 7, 290 Queen Street, Auckland

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: 250 international students

Sites: Levels 6 and 7, 290 Queen Street, Auckland

Communications International Education Ltd, trading as Tasman International Academies (TIA) was first registered in 2006 and began providing tuition in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) for international students. The organisation has grown since 2006 and now offers:

- TIA Certificate in General English (Level 4)
- TIA Preparation for International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (Level 4)
- National Diploma in Business (Level 5)
- National Diploma in Computing (Level 5)
- National Diploma in Computing (Level 6)
- National Diploma in Computing (Level 7).

As the National Diploma in Computing (Level 7) is being phased out by NZQA, TIA has approval to deliver its own Diploma in Information Technology (Multi Media) (Level 7) and Diploma in Information Technology (Support and Operations) (Level 7).

At its last audit (2009) TIA met all but two requirements of QA Standard One, the standard then in force. The requirements not met related to not meeting deadlines for NZQA-required attestations. The attestations were provided at the audit.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Communications International Education Limited trading as Tasman International Academies**.

TIA has an achievement rate of 70-75 per cent for its diploma programmes and this is comparable with national data.¹ Students who complete these programmes gain a broad range of skills, including an improved ability to communicate in English.

Achievement and retention is carefully monitored and 80 per cent of students enrolled in the Certificate in General English complete the course and many progress on to the next level.

Staff are well trained and learners are highly satisfied with the quality of the teaching staff. The organisation aims to create a warm and friendly atmosphere to make the students feel welcome and comfortable and there was good evidence that this was occurring. Students expressed satisfaction with the level of support they received and felt the school had met their expectations.

TIA has experienced a period of rapid growth which has placed pressure upon resources available for teaching and learning. Management is addressing this issue.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Communications International Education Limited trading as Tasman International Academies**.

TIA has a good understanding of how well students are performing. Their understanding of learners' performance could be strengthened by benchmarking across time and externally.

Students are encouraged to give regular feedback and they are given both formal and informal opportunities to do so in their own language. Course evaluations are used to inform improvements to teaching practices and resources. Pre- and post-assessment moderation is occurring, both internally and externally, to ensure fairness and consistency of assessment practices across the programmes.

The management team spoke of ensuring that key stakeholder needs were being met in order to build a good reputation and ensure word of mouth referrals. Open communication and a willingness to listen to issues were positive features mentioned by both staff and students. TIA has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and there was evidence of continuous improvement. TIA acknowledged that greater efforts to collect

¹ Ministry of Education. (Feb, 2007). *Retention and Achievement*. Online resource from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/retention_and_achievement See data tables.

outcome data would improve their understanding of how well they were meeting stakeholder needs.

TEO response

The TEO has confirmed factual accuracy of the report.

Basis for External Evaluation and Review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

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).

Findings

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

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of TIA included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- International student support.

The following focus areas were chosen to ensure the external evaluation and review surveyed a large proportion of the students enrolled at the organisation.

- TIA Certificate in General English (Level 4)
- National Diploma in Business (Level 5).

Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

1.1 How well do learners 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 **Adequate**.

Context

The National Diploma in Business (Level 5) is a unit standards based programme and students are given multiple opportunities to achieve those standards. The TIA Certificate in General English is a 12-week course offered at a number of levels including elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate. General English students are

assessed every six weeks and the results are shared with the students and determine whether they are moved on to the next level.

Explanation

TIA has an achievement rate of 70-75 per cent for the National Diploma in Business course and this is comparable with national data.² Students who complete this programme gain a broad range of skills, including an improved ability to communicate in written and spoken English. Students are given multiple opportunities to achieve the necessary unit standards and learners are clear about what they need to do to achieve. The computing courses have not been running long enough for any students to have graduated, although data viewed during the external evaluation and review (EER) showed that a similar rate of unit standard achievement is being reached.

Students in the General English programme are regularly assessed to monitor their rate of achievement in the four components of English: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The assessments are based on internationally benchmarked resources and pre-moderation, and exemplars are used to ensure consistency. Tutors have the freedom to move students up a level if they feel they have achieved to the required standard. Retention is carefully monitored and 80 per cent of students enrolled complete their level of the Certificate in General English. Many progress on to the next level or on to the preparation for IELTS course.

Although tutors and managers are monitoring retention and achievement data, there is little benchmarking externally or across time. The different methods tutors use to collect achievement data should be shared across the organisation so that best practice can be highlighted.

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 **Adequate**.

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

Context

The programmes being offered by TIA are predominantly pathways to further study. Many students who complete their course want to study at either a university or polytechnic. TIA has a memorandum of understanding with a large polytechnic to staircase students from its business and computing programmes into the polytechnic's Bachelor programmes with entitlements to cross-credits. A key marketing strategy, outlined by the managing director, was giving students a positive experience to ensure word of mouth referrals.

Explanation

² Ministry of Education. (Feb, 2007). *Retention and Achievement*. Online resource from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/retention_and_achievement See data tables.

Learners spoken to at the time of the EER visit, from across the range of programmes, were confident that their English had improved significantly while studying at TIA. They also spoke favourably of the benefits of the international perspective that studying at TIA had given them. The majority of students said they attended TIA based on the recommendation of a friend or relative.

There was some evidence that learners from TIA had progressed to further study or employment successfully, although outcome data is not collected systematically by the organisation. While the tutor responsible for the preparation for IELTS course reported hearing back from 80 per cent of his students, this information is not formally captured.

It is logistically difficult to track graduates who leave the school, although the organisation has made some attempts to contact graduates who have moved into employment. Students mentioned that they would like more information and advice about finding employment in New Zealand, to help them secure a job on completion of their programme.

While TIA has established formal agreements for its students to progress to Bachelor programmes at a large polytechnic and similar education institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia, it is not known how many students go on to study at these organisations.

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 **Good**.

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

Context

All students studying at TIA are full fee-paying international students. Most of these students come from China, India, and Korea. Students enrolling in the diploma programmes are required to supply evidence of their IELTS level or participate in an English language test administered by the organisation.

The National Diplomas in Computing (Levels 5-7) were established to meet the demand signalled by Immigration New Zealand through its Long Term Skill Shortage List. Just months after the TIA National Diplomas in Computing began, a review by Immigration New Zealand lifted the minimum qualification requirement for information technology professionals to Bachelor level.

Explanation

The processes which occur on enrolment ensure that students are enrolled in the appropriate programme with the level of English language support being correctly identified. Students in the diploma programmes who require extra support are given free access to the General English courses. The placement test given to those students enrolling in the ESOL programmes is an internationally benchmarked assessment. The EER team heard that an improved level of competency in English was occurring across the programmes offered by TIA.

The organisation aims to maintain the currency and relevance of its programmes through links with external organisations. A memorandum of understanding with a large polytechnic provides links which are utilised to inform moderation and course design. The principal also has an association with a number of local business networks.

The classroom activities encourage learner engagement. A variety of teaching styles and approaches are used to introduce new material to students and to ensure variety and interest. Students reported being very satisfied with the level of support they receive from their tutors, frequently mentioning the one-to-one support, and the expertise and patience of the teaching staff.

The resources available for the tutors at TIA appear to be adequate, although there is pressure on certain pieces of equipment at peak times. The staff who teach the ESOL courses need more support to enable them to integrate technology into their teaching.

Learners are given regular opportunities to provide feedback on their courses and tutors and there was evidence of improvements being made in response to feedback. Learners feel confident discussing issues which concern them with their tutors, with support staff, or anonymously on course evaluation forms. The same course evaluation forms have been used by the organisation for a considerable period of time and a review of the questions and responses may help determine if they are still useful for gathering feedback.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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 **Good**.

Context

In 2009 TIA expanded its range of programmes which required an expansion of staff and facilities. Subsequently the organisation has been structured into three divisions: English, Business, and Computing, each with a team leader. Most staff are employed on part-time contracts.

Explanation

The organisation supports the tutors with in-house training and development. For example, some tutors needed support adjusting to assessing with unit standards and they are being given assistance. Regular course evaluations, staff self-assessments, and tutor observations are all used to inform the performance management process. Most of the tutors are well qualified in their particular field.

Although many staff work part time, fortnightly team meetings are used to share information and coordinate teaching and assessment. Regular email contact with staff is also used to help tutors feel connected with developments at TIA. New staff are introduced to the organisation and its processes and peer support is evident.

Assessments are pre-moderated and there is good evidence of post-moderation occurring. However, there is a heavy reliance on the educational expertise of the principal. The organisation plans to develop other members of staff to better understand the purpose and

practice of assessment moderation, particularly with respect to unit standards based programmes. External moderation of assessment occurs in order to meet the requirements of delivering national qualifications and also to ensure the standards are consistent with other large education providers.

Students are positive about their interactions with staff and commented on the variety of activities used in the classroom. They feel able to ask questions about areas they do not understand, and mentioned the one-to-one support as being something they valued highly.

A heavy reliance on part-time staff places a lot of pressure on certain staff members to manage and ensure the smooth running of the programmes.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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 **Good**.

Context

TIA has a mix of nationalities among the student body, and the different student support staff reflect this mix of language and cultures. The marketing team is responsible for the pastoral care of students. TIA is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

Explanation

Most students are satisfied with the level of support they are receiving from the tutors and marketing and administration team at TIA. Students reported feeling confident that they could raise issues with the administration team or with their tutors and that their issues were dealt with appropriately.

There is an effective orientation for new students, which introduces them to the organisation and the tutors and staff who are able to support them during their study and time in New Zealand. Students who need advice with banking, transport, or accommodation are given the necessary support. However, there is a lack of private space to counsel students should the need arise and this was raised as a concern.

The issue of support staff being sometimes too busy to deal with the pastoral care issues of students is expected to be relieved by the reallocation of roles. There was evidence of positive changes being made to address students' concerns.

The friendly atmosphere of TIA was noted and it is part of the culture which the management team are aiming to achieve. Students have access to free coffee and tea and there is good space provided for students to socialise. Regular social outings are a highlight for students.

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

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 **Good**.

Context

TIA has experienced a period of rapid growth and this has required considerable expenditure on computing equipment and a refitting of space. The staff have been restructured around the different teaching teams and administration and marketing staff.

Explanation

There is an open and honest communication between the management team and staff and there is evidence that some issues raised by staff are addressed effectively by management. The friendly environment that is being promoted is as applicable to staff as it is to students, with some tutors likening it to a family atmosphere.

There are good processes in place for performance management and for the monitoring of teaching and learning processes. The staff felt there was a good balance between guidance and support and autonomy in the way they managed their classes. The regular team meetings and email communication were useful in keeping staff informed and connected.

However, communication with the organisation as a whole could be improved. Staff were unclear as to the vision and goals of the organisation. One consequence of this was important resourcing decisions not being communicated to key staff members. A lack of sufficient resources was raised by tutors as an ongoing issue. The focus of the organisation has been on managing growth, and a period of consolidation is required.

Part 2: Performance in 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 **Good**.

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

Context

Refer section 1.6 *How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?*

2.2 Focus area: Student Support (including internationals)

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

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

Context

Refer section 1.5 *How well are learners guided and supported?* for information on this focus area.

2.3 Focus area: National Diploma in Business

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

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

Context

The National Diploma in Business has been offered at TIA since February 2008. Currently TIA is applying to offer the National Diploma in Business (Level 6) for students who want the higher level qualification.

Explanation

Students are receiving a broad international perspective on business studies while they improve their English language skills and experience life in a new country. These were the outcomes and achievements noted by the students enrolled in the Diploma in Business spoken to by the evaluation team. Approximately 70 per cent of learners were successful in achieving the diploma.

Students were satisfied with the level of support they were receiving from their tutors and enjoyed the variety of activities used in the classroom.

There are not many resources available for the tutors and students on campus. Staff and students felt the teaching and learning could be supported with better access to textbooks and online resources.

2.4 Focus area: Certificate in General English (Level 4)

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

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

Context

The Certificate in General English is taught from elementary level to upper-intermediate. The students' starting levels are identified using an international English language placement test.

Explanation

The students' achievements and attendance are carefully monitored and 80 per cent of learners gain a certificate at their level of achievement.

Learners reported that they enjoyed their classes and found the variety of activities used by the tutors kept their learning interesting. They appreciated the opportunities to give feedback and there were examples of improvements being made in response.

There is good peer support and collegiality among staff and an open, friendly management style. All staff are observed in the classroom by the principal as part of their performance review. Staff noted that peer observation as a development tool, unrelated to performance management, could also be useful.

Teaching and learning could be enhanced with the integration of more technology into the classroom. A wide range of audiovisual and online resources are not able to be utilised at the moment. New resources purchased by TIA should go some way towards resolving this issue.

Statements of Confidence

The statements of confidence are derived from the findings within and across the focus areas. A four-step scale is used: highly confident, confident, not yet confident, not confident.

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Communications International Education Limited trading as Tasman International Academies**.

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Achievement and retention is carefully monitored and 80 per cent of students enrolled in the Certificate in General English complete the course and many progress on to the next level.

Staff are well trained and learners are highly satisfied with the quality of the teaching. The organisation creates a warm and friendly atmosphere that makes the students feel welcome and comfortable. Students expressed satisfaction with the level of support they received and felt the school had met their expectations.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Communications International Education Limited trading as Tasman International Academies**.

TIA has a good understanding of how well students are performing. Its understanding of learners' performance could be strengthened by benchmarking across time and externally.

Students are encouraged to give feedback and they are given both formal and informal opportunities to do so in their own language. The information collected from course evaluations informs performance management processes along with other self-assessment material, including peer observations.

The management team spoke of ensuring that key stakeholder needs were being met in order to build a good reputation and ensure word of mouth referrals. Open communication and a willingness to listen to issues were features mentioned by both staff and students. TIA has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and there was evidence of continuous improvement. They acknowledged that greater efforts to collect outcome data would improve their understanding of how well they were meeting stakeholder needs.

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Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's regular scheduling policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

Recommendations

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

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz