



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Communications International Education Limited
trading as Tasman International Academies

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 3 November 2011

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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 | Communications International Education Limited trading as Tasman International Academies (TIA) |
| Location: | Levels 6, 7, and 8, 290 Queen Street, Auckland CBD |
| Type: | Private Training Establishment |
| First registered: | 2006 |
| Number of students: | Domestic (TEC-funded): nil International: 440 |
| Number of staff: | 28 (full-time and part-time) |
| Scope of active accreditation: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• English (six levels plus IELTS)• National Diploma in Business (Levels 5 and 6)• National Diploma In Computing (Level 5)• Diploma in Computing (Level 7)• Diploma in Design and Print Production (Level 5) |
| Sites: | Head office and training centre as above. |
| Distinctive characteristics: | TIA began providing tuition in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) for international students. The organisation has grown substantially since 2006 and now offers a range of programmes as above. |
| Recent significant changes: | In late 2010 TIA, in consultation with NZQA, purchased the Diploma in Design and Print Production from another Auckland PTE which was in the process of closure. As part of the sale and purchase, TIA agreed |

to “teach out” the programme to five existing students. However, a complaint was made to NZQA and the NZ Herald about alleged inconsistencies in the assessment of these students. The subsequent article in the NZ Herald (2 April 2011) was strongly critical of TIA’s quality assurance processes. NZQA investigated the official complaint and did not find any non-compliance.

Previous quality assurance history:

TIA underwent an initial EER in January 2010 at which it was rated: Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.

A routine visit by an NZQA review team on 9 and 10 February 2011 identified several non-compliances, which were considered high risk, associated with student fee protection, immigration and visa requirements, student attendance monitoring, and the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. These non-compliances, combined with TIA’s history of not meeting external moderation requirements, led to NZQA issuing a “compliance notice” under section 255A of the Education Act 1989, in May 2011. In addition to requiring that TIA address the non-compliances with urgency, the compliance notice also gave notice that NZQA intended to schedule a further EER because of its concern about TIA’s quality processes.

TIA is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, including 14-18 year-olds.

Other:

TIA has had ongoing moderation issues which were not yet resolved at the time of the EER visit. Results from NZQA moderation completed shortly after the EER visit, again raised concerns with TIA’s assessment practices.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope for the external evaluation and review consisted of the mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support including international students.

In addition, the following focus areas were selected:

- Diploma in Design and Print Production (Level 5)
- Information technology programmes (including the National Diploma in Computing and the Diploma in Information Technology (both Level 7).

The focus areas above were selected to provide a reasonable representation of TIA's activities. The Diploma in Design and Print Production was included at TIA's request because it had been the focus of negative publicity earlier in the year. English and business studies programmes were included in the April 2010 EER report.

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 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 external evaluation and review (EER) was conducted in late July 2011. Prior to the EER visit, the lead evaluator visited the site and met with the owner, the principal, and the director of studies to agree the EER scope. A two and a half-day EER visit was made to the TIA site in Auckland, where the evaluation team, consisting of the lead evaluator, one other evaluator, and the principal evaluation advisor met with the owner, management staff, teaching staff, administration staff, students, and external representatives. In parallel with the EER visit, a member of NZQA's Risk and Compliance team visited for one and a half-days to determine TIA's compliance with the requirements identified in the compliance notice issued 26 May 2011. These issues related to:

- Attendance systems and records
- Records of appropriate visas
- Records of travel and medical insurance
- Student database information.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the educational performance of **Tasman International Academies**.

TIA could not comprehensively demonstrate the long-term benefits of its programmes. There was evidence that the graduates of the Diploma in Design and Print Production programme were achieving positive employment and further study outcomes. However, information regarding outcomes of the information technology programmes were informal and sketchy and indicates that students are not being well prepared for employment or further study.

Qualification completion rates on the Diploma in Design and Print Production programme average 87 per cent. Completion rates on the information technology programmes, at 76 per cent, approximate to the national average, according to Ministry of Education information. Although this level of achievement is good, it is overshadowed by the history of poor moderation which challenges the validity of results. The outcome of NZQA moderation completed shortly after the EER visit, again points to inadequacies in TIA's assessment practices. This was of concern to the EER team but, more importantly, should be of significant concern to TIA. Likewise, the fact that TIA could not comprehensively demonstrate the long-term benefits of its programmes meant that the EER team could not be confident in TIA's performance.

Feedback from students indicates that programmes are delivered in a manner that enables them to understand the material being presented, and teachers and students relate well to each other. However, information technology students have, in this and at the previous EER, expressed that they would like the programme to be more practically orientated to better prepare them for employment in New Zealand.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Tasman International Academies**.

There is little evidence that TIA recognises the value of self-assessment and systematically uses it as a tool to improve its educational performance. To date, improvement has tended to be reactive and piecemeal rather than as a result of systematic long-term planning. Particularly disappointing was the fact that quality improvements signalled at the previous EER had not been implemented. There have been some worthwhile improvements in the two or three months immediately prior to the EER, brought about mostly since the recent appointment of the director of studies.

TIA has systems for gathering learner feedback, but there was no evidence that this information was being used to make improvements to the programmes.

This external evaluation noted that TIA is now compliant with regard to the findings of the NZQA review in February 2011, but it is disappointing that it took an external review to alert TIA to significant failings in its own systems.

TIA has grown quickly and in the past has relied on more personal approaches to gathering feedback and communicating issues. However, with the growth in numbers this approach is no longer appropriate or effective.

The challenge for TIA is to direct its self-assessment efforts to developing a systematic approach to gain a greater level of understanding of educational performance and use this understanding to bring about improvements linked to valid and reliable achievement data and valued outcomes for learners.

TEO response

Communications International Education Limited trading as Tasman International Academies has accepted factual accuracy of this report.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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**.

Qualification completions rates for the Diploma in Design and Print Production programme average 87 per cent. Of the first cohort of eight students, seven successfully completed. Five students from a cohort of six are about to graduate. This is a good result. The current cohort of ten students are all achieving well. This programme has been developed from a proprietary programme produced by Adobe, which includes detailed teaching schedules, teaching resources, and assessments. TIA has made arrangements to moderate assessments with another provider of arts and design programmes, but to date this moderation has been informal.

Completion rates on the information technology programmes, at 76 per cent, approximate to the national average, according to Ministry of Education information. However, achievement rates are overshadowed by the history of poor moderation which challenges the validity of results. This was of concern to the EER team but, more importantly, should be of significant concern to TIA. Staff, without training, have designed and run assessments with limited understanding of the evidence and judgement principles of sound assessment. This issue was raised at the last EER, at subsequent reviews, and through external moderation reports. TIA undertook to provide training and development of staff, but it was not until the appointment of the director of studies in May 2011 that a one-day moderation training workshop was organised for staff two months before this EER. In general, TIA's attempts to improve its assessment and moderation processes have been too little, too late.

The organisation does not have a systematic approach to increasing student achievement and there is no mention of student achievement targets or strategies in TIA's 2011 Goals and Objectives. It is likely, therefore, that individual student success is the result of individual student and/or staff effort rather than methodical processes by TIA. Given that the majority of teaching staff do not have teaching training or qualifications, their understanding of the factors that contribute to student success vary.

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

The installation of EnrolPro, a student management system, in late May 2011 should enable TIA to monitor student achievement more effectively and identify opportunities to make improvements.

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 **Poor**.

TIA could not comprehensively demonstrate the long-term benefits of all its programmes. While outcomes from the Diploma in Design and Print Production are positive and well understood, other programme outcomes information is unclear.

The Diploma in Design and Print Production programme leader records the employment or further study destinations of her students and she engages with graduates on a regular basis to determine how well the programme has prepared them for their current roles. This information is analysed and used to make improvements to the design and delivery of the programme. External stakeholders indicated that the Diploma in Design and Print Production students were learning useful skills which prepared them well for employment or further study. Outcomes for the diploma are very positive, with one graduate studying for a design degree at university and achieving well. All other diploma graduates are working full-time in the design or print industry.

The TIA website states that the Diploma in Information Technology, "...aims to provide learners with knowledge of current computing technologies and trends, with a view to producing skilled, employable graduates that meet industry requirements...". However, information regarding outcomes of the information technology programmes was informal and sketchy and indicates that students are not being well prepared for employment or further study. Information technology students have, in this and at the previous EER, expressed that they would like the programme to be more practically orientated to better prepare them for employment in New Zealand. There was no evidence that TIA had considered, or attempted to address, the issue. The EER team spoke to a group of Diploma in Information Technology students who were one week away from completion. None of this cohort had a job, or job prospect, confirmed. The majority of international students enter the information technology programmes with the aim of achieving a qualification at level 5 or above, gaining a work permit and, ultimately, permanent residency. A few individual successes on this pathway were claimed, and the principal said that he noted positive student outcomes in his diary, but there was no formal analysis of how many information technology students achieve this goal or consideration of the ways in which they could be assisted.

Management staff reported that some of the graduates from the information technology programme go on to further study at Whitireia Community Polytechnic. Whitireia staff indicated that, to their knowledge, only one student had informed

them of previous study at TIA, and that student was achieving well. In spite of the previous EER report signalling gaps in the organisation's understanding of valued outcomes, attempts to address this were inadequate.

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 **Adequate**.

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

It is unclear how external relationships enhance the quality of the information technology programmes being delivered at TIA. The main source of external input appears to be through other providers. It has been evident for at least the past year and a half that the information technology programmes need to be more practically orientated to better prepare graduates for employment in New Zealand, yet there is no use of industry speakers, no field trips, and no practicums included in the programmes. Information technology programme staff have researched recruitment sites and identified that the skill set and credentials that the job market is demanding differ from what is being taught at TIA, but it was unclear how this information was to be used to effect improvements to the programmes. More effective stakeholder engagement at all levels of the organisation would improve educational outcomes for students.

TIA has an advisory board which is made up primarily of TIA staff and members of staff of other providers who are often outnumbered at meetings by TIA staff. Membership of the advisory board also changes regularly.

The programme leader of the Diploma in Design and Print Production has some ongoing interaction with stakeholders through varying mechanisms. These mechanisms include ongoing contact with graduates, contact with other providers, and follow-up with employers.

TIA has made efforts to seek feedback from learners. As well as a formal student feedback form, the principal and managing director have an open-door policy and it is clear that staff and students approach them with problems and issues. However, despite some significant level of dissatisfaction with information technology teaching, as raised in some of the survey forms viewed, there was no indication that the issues had been raised by staff or addressed. Management was not able to cite examples of how course content and delivery methodology had been changed as a result of feedback from learners or external stakeholders.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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 **Poor**.

Teachers and students relate well to each other. Students spoke highly of TIA's teaching staff. They liked the open, friendly style and have some access to the teaching staff outside of class hours.

Course evaluations completed by the learners contain lots of feedback. However, the processes stop at the collection and collation of data and there was no evidence that the information collected is systematically informing improvements to teaching practice. A more systematic approach following the gathering of feedback, which could include reporting back to students on actions taken, is essential and may improve educational outcomes for students.

TIA has a history of not meeting NZQA external moderation standards. The appointment of the director of studies in May 2011 has led to a focus on improving the nature of assessments, although at the time of the EER the latest resubmission of TIA's materials for external moderation had not been fully moderated by NZQA. This moderation, completed shortly after the EER visit, again points to serious weakness in TIA's assessment practices as only one of the seven assessments submitted, met the national standard. The director of studies recently conducted one professional development workshop for staff on the subject of assessment and moderation.

Although teaching staff are well qualified in their respective disciplines, few, other than the English teachers, hold formal teaching qualifications. The EER team saw some evidence of good teaching practice but recommends that teaching and student achievement would be enhanced by the training and credentialing of teaching staff. TIA is in the process of introducing the internet-based system, Moodle, as a platform for blended delivery of the information technology programmes. The only training that has occurred was one day for the programme leader and was focussed on the technological aspects of Moodle, indicating that there has been no regard for the considerable changes in pedagogy associated with moving to a blended delivery mode.

Only since the appointment of the director of studies has there been evidence of TIA purposely providing opportunities for staff to participate in authentic and meaningful discussion about teaching practice. There was a marked absence of underpinning adult education principles in much of the material viewed.

TIA has a peer observation procedure. Some staff have participated, but more regular and ongoing feedback of a formative nature should assist with improving teaching practice.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

TIA provides appropriate pastoral and student support. However, TIA has not linked student support to student achievement. A more analytical and systematic approach to student support could lead to increased completion rates.

TIA has introduced a process for recording attendance three times a day, and EnrolPro will enable staff to monitor the results and take appropriate action. However, it is not clear whether the attendance monitoring is as a result of compliance requirements or of the organisation acting on its belief that students who attend classes have a greater chance of success. Students who do not attend are generally not followed up until they fall below the 80 per cent threshold. The exception is the Diploma in Design and Print Production, where the programme leader follows up on absences on the day they occur. TIA's recent practice on insisting that students are punctual for class is a positive because it is driven by an underpinning pedagogical purpose.

Students reported that they received adequate pre-enrolment guidance and that an orientation programme was available to them. Diploma in Design and Print Production students commented that they incurred costs for compulsory course materials which were not openly communicated to them prior to enrolment. A search of TIA's website found no mention of additional course costs.

TIA does not offer support and coaching for students seeking employment in New Zealand. Hence, as previously discussed, students are frustrated by the lack of employment prospects as they near the end of their programme. Better guidance and support could also inform self-assessment decisions and business improvements and, if the results were positive, could be useful for TIA's marketing.

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

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**.

Clearly, there has been movement towards improved self-assessment in the last three months since receipt of the compliance notice and the appointment of the director of studies, and TIA has made an effort to understand and improve the educational performance of its programmes. Self-assessment prior to the last three months has generally been based around external compliance or the marketing and fiscal needs of the organisation rather than deriving from a focus on educational achievement.

At TIA's last EER there were challenges identified and undertakings made to address them. For instance, greater efforts needed to be made to collect outcomes data to improve TIA's understanding of how it was identifying and meeting stakeholder needs and building staff capability in assessment and moderation. Not only had those issues not been addressed until the last two or three months, there appeared to be a hiatus in some of the good self-assessment work that TIA had commenced by early 2010. The statement made by the principal that, "we were not expecting another EER until 2014" signals that TIA's self-assessment was being largely driven by perceived external requirements rather than a commitment to continuous improvement. It is acknowledged that TIA has responded quickly to non-compliance issues identified during the recent NZQA review. However, the non-compliance notice would not have been issued had the organisation's own quality improvement processes identified and resolved these issues.

The challenge for TIA is to direct its efforts towards developing a greater level of understanding of educational performance and bringing about consequent improvement by a more systematic analysis and consequent action from self-assessment activities.

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 **Adequate**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Student support including international students

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

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

TIA is providing a supportive learning environment for its international students and is keeping in contact outside of the normal hours of tuition. The students interviewed at this evaluation were mostly positive about their experience at TIA and it was evident that they regularly recommend the organisation to their friends and colleagues.

2.3 Focus Area: Diploma in Design and Print Production (Level 5)

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

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

2.4 Focus Area: Information technology programmes (including the National Diploma in Computing and Diploma in Information Technology (both Level 7)

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

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

Recommendations

In addition to the recommendations implied or expressed within the report, NZQA recommends that Tasman International Academy:

- review the collection of data for self-assessment
- build capability in analysing this data
- establish a comprehensive self-assessment regime.

Appendix

Regulatory 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 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).

*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/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eeer/introduction/>*

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