

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Communications International
Education Limited trading as Tasman
International Academies

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 23 January 2013

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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:	Communications International Education Limited trading as Tasman International Academies (Tasman)
Type:	Private training establishment
Location:	Levels 7 and 8, 290 Queen Street, Auckland
First registered:	16 June 2006
Courses currently delivered	English, National Diploma in Business (Levels 5 and 6), Diploma in Design and Print Production (Level 5), Diploma in Information Technology Level 7 (Support and Operations), Diploma in Information Technology Level 7 (Multimedia), National Diploma in Computing (Level 5)
Code of Practice signatory	Yes for students aged 14-17 and 18 years upwards
Number of students:	All international, 89 students comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• English (two classes), 17 students• Information Technology including Multimedia (three classes), 35 students• Design (one class), nine students• Business levels 5 and 6 (two classes), 28 students <p>The students are from China (35 per cent), India (54 per cent), Korea (9 per cent), and Brazil (2 per cent).</p>

Number of staff:	15 full-time;12 part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English to level 4 IELTS (International English Language Testing System) • National Diploma in Business (Levels 5 and 6) • National Diploma in Computing (Level 5) • Diploma in Information Technology (Support and Operations) (Level 7) • Diploma in Information Technology (Multimedia) (Level 7) • Diploma in Design and Print Production (Level 5)
Distinctive characteristics:	Tasman began by providing tuition in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for international students. The organisation grew substantially from 2006 and broadened its range of programmes.
Recent significant changes:	Student numbers at the previous external evaluation and review (EER) in July 2011 were 440; at this EER they were 89. In response to the July 2011 EER findings and subsequent improvement plan, Tasman hired new staff, including a part-time administration person, full-time academic coordinator for the Business and Information Technology schools and a part-time operations and quality management coordinator. All three people are on the Tasman management team. Tasman also recruited a new tutor in March 2012 for the Design programme.
Previous quality assurance history:	Tasman's second EER in July 2011 was conducted by an evaluation team of three members: two evaluators and NZQA's principal evaluation advisor. The statements of confidence reached were: Not Yet Confident in educational performance and Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment. In parallel with the EER visit, a member of NZQA's Risk and Compliance team visited to determine Tasman's compliance with requirements detailed in a compliance notice issued 26 May 2011. These issues related to: attendance systems and records, records of

appropriate visas, records of travel and medical insurance, and student database information. NZQA's compliance notice imposed conditions on Tasman's registration, to protect the interests of new students, until Tasman gained a level of Confident or better in educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

Business programme NZQA moderation results have improved since June 2011.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope for the EER consisted of the mandatory focus areas of governance, management, and strategy, and international student support. The programme focus areas suggested for selection by Tasman were the National Diploma in Business (Levels 5 and 6) and the Diploma in Design and Print Production (Level 5). These focus areas were mutually agreed by Tasman and NZQA on the basis that Business was not a focus area at the 2011 EER and Tasman had appointed a full-time academic coordinator for the Business and Information Technology schools since the 2011 EER. Design was a focus area at the 2011 EER, providing a point of comparison for this EER, and a new tutor was appointed in early 2012.

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.

The EER team consisted of two lead evaluators, one of whom had led the July 2011 EER, while the other had no previous EER experience with Tasman. An NZQA observer was also present but took no part in the decision-making process. The EER was conducted over two days at Tasman's site in Auckland. The evaluators met with the director, school principal, international student manager, academic coordinator, marketing, administration, and student support managers, the Business and Design programme leaders, teaching staff, and students. The evaluation team also met four representatives of the advisory committee and spoke to external stakeholders by phone.

In addition, a comprehensive range of documentation was reviewed, including: records of attendance; student handbooks; records of moderation; assessment procedures; course outlines; a report on plagiarism; student feedback; minutes of staff, management, and advisory board meetings; records of industry consultation; destination data and exit interviews; teacher observations and staff professional development plans; and records of self-assessment and classroom management workshops conducted by Tasman.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

Through internal and external benchmarking, Tasman was able to demonstrate to the evaluation team the benefits of the Business and Design programmes. Internal targets for course and qualification completion across all programmes delivered at Tasman are set at 85-90 per cent and are compared from term to term within a five-term year. Externally, Tasman benchmarks itself with similar providers that have Highly Confident or Confident ratings across both educational performance and self-assessment.

The Design programme meets both internal and external benchmarking, with a course completion rate of 85 per cent and qualification completion and retention rates of 100 per cent in 2011. Ninety per cent of the 2011 graduates from the programme gained employment or went on to further study. Although this programme has low student numbers in 2012, with only nine students, these outcomes are a result of Tasman's decision to respond appropriately to student feedback by adapting the programme to a project format and providing one-to-one tutoring to students during class time. The newly appointed design tutor contributes to these outcomes by being enthusiastic about the subject matter and having current industry knowledge as a result of retaining a small client base of his own.

The Business programme results are a reflection of the quality of the teaching and programme design. They also meet internal and external benchmarking criteria. Figures supplied by Tasman for the National Diploma in Business level 5 programme for term 5, 2011 show course completion rates of 95 per cent, qualification completion of 100 per cent, and a retention rate of 93 per cent. By term 3, 2012, course and qualification rates were 100 per cent and retention was 75 per cent. The completion rate for the National Diploma in Business level 6 for term 5, 2011 was 98 per cent, with qualification completion of 96 per cent and retention, 100 per cent. The term 3, 2012 course completion rate was 86 per cent, and qualification completion and retention were both 100 per cent. While these results mostly show improvements, Tasman has not been systematically analysing learner achievement data for sufficient time to draw any long-term conclusions about the factors that contribute to these results. However, Tasman has developed a system of exit interviews to assist in its understanding of why students leave the organisation and the plans graduates have for the future.

The evaluation team's confidence in Tasman's overall learner results is supported by the evidence sighted of internal pre-assessment and external post-assessment moderation of teaching materials and assessor judgements, which have shown improvements since 2011. Tasman staff members have also attended moderation

workshops and professional development around moderation processes to gain extra skills. Employment outcomes for the Business programmes are tracking at 70 per cent, and employers of design students indicated that students were well prepared for employment, with good practical and customer relations skills.

Tasman academic staff have appropriate subject-specific qualifications and are working towards completing unit standards in adult teaching. Students reported that they were well taught. Learner achievement is tracking in a positive direction at Tasman; however, more time is required for sufficient data to be gathered and analysed to identify long-term trends to justify a higher rating.

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**.

Management and staff at Tasman recognise the value of self-assessment and have begun to use it as a tool to improve educational performance. In response to the July 2011 EER findings and subsequent improvement plan, Tasman hired new staff, including a part-time administration person, a full-time academic coordinator for the Business and Information Technology schools, and a part-time operations and quality management coordinator. It also undertook a planned review of the quality management system, with a particular focus on the Code of Practice for the Pastoral care of International Students (Code of Practice), including giving oversight for aspects of the code to a specific staff member. The advisory board assists with an external perspective by including representation from education, industry, immigration, and the design and business sectors, and meets two to three times a year.

Policies are communicated effectively to students through the student handbook, induction process, and ongoing tutor/student interactions. Policies around the Code of Practice and complaints procedure are displayed on noticeboards around the campus for easy reference. The staged review of the quality management system has allowed all staff to become familiar with policies and procedures and have an input into changes to the system.

Learner feedback is regularly sought and analysed to inform possible changes and improvements to Tasman's programmes. The most notable improvements are the introduction of voluntary pre-employment workshops, delivered by an external presenter, where writing curricula vitae and cover letters, and interview skills, are taught. This initiative is a direct response to the 2011 EER report which stated, 'Students are not being well prepared for employment or further study'. Other examples of worthwhile improvements are: goal-setting with students (at the beginning of a programme to allow the tutor to target the teaching to collective and individual student goals), and the review of these goals at the end of the programme to gauge how well students' collective and individual goals have been met. Regular progress reports, every six weeks, are provided to students to ensure they understand how well they are progressing or whether they need extra tuition.

Tasman understands the importance of good attendance to learner achievement and has developed clear policies to track and follow up student attendance. Other examples of the proactive approach Tasman has taken in 2012 are workshops for staff on the Code of Practice and classroom management and exit interviews supervised by an external contractor, to gauge satisfaction with the course, teaching, and assessment.

All these initiatives have resulted in Tasman becoming better informed about its internal and external stakeholder needs and able to arrive at evidence-based decisions to guide the organisation's development. Detailed analysis of the outcomes from these decisions is in the early stages as Tasman has not been systematically analysing learner achievement data for sufficient time to draw any long-term conclusions about the factors that contribute to these results. However, the evaluation team noted that there is sufficient evidence that through improvements made based on self-assessment, Tasman has substantially improved the quality of the education it now provides and is making a positive contribution to the motivation and commitment of its students and staff.

Findings¹

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 **Good**.

Tasman has established internal and external benchmarking procedures that enable the organisation to gauge individual and collective student progress across all the programmes offered. Benchmarks include course and qualification completion rate targets of 85-90 per cent, comparing learner results from term to term in a five-term yearly cycle, and using external providers' learner completion outcomes (similar providers with a Highly Confident or Confident rating for educational performance and capability in self-assessment) as external benchmarks. For the focus areas selected for this EER, Tasman is meeting or exceeding these targets, as discussed in the statement of confidence on educational performance.

An appreciation that poor student attendance directly affects students' rates of success has led to Tasman developing clear policies and procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality in class. Attendance is monitored three times a day, and students are contacted on the day of their absence. If a student has less than 90 per cent attendance in a week, they receive a verbal warning. If the absence continues into week 2, they receive a written warning, and by week 3 they receive a second written warning and are required to meet the principal. Any unapproved absence after this time is reported to Immigration New Zealand. Students spoken to by the evaluation team understood the importance of high levels of attendance for their learning and for satisfying the conditions of their visas.

The student management system installed in May 2011 has enabled Tasman to monitor student achievement more effectively, particularly since the appointment of a part-time administration person to help develop staff capability in the student management system. Tasman is now beginning to generate reports from the system that contribute to ongoing self-assessment.

The organisation has developed a systematic approach to increasing student achievement through establishing student achievement targets and by upskilling staff in areas identified in the 2011 EER report as requiring attention, such as professional development for staff in adult teaching. However, Tasman has not been systematically analysing learner achievement data for sufficient time to draw any long-term conclusions about the factors that contribute to these results.

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

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 **Good**.

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

Tasman has developed a range of worthwhile initiatives to increase the value of outcomes for both students and employers. For example, the organisation has developed pre-employment job skills workshops with an outside industry presenter to fill the gap identified in the 2011 EER report that, 'students would like their programmes to be more practically oriented to better prepare them for employment in New Zealand'. Although these workshops are voluntary, they are well attended and occur each term, and students commented that they have secured jobs using the skills and knowledge gained from these workshops. Employers contacted by the evaluation team confirmed this, with one employer who had employed five Tasman design graduates commenting that they had good practical skills and were more 'work-ready' than graduates from other tertiary sector providers. Tasman is also leading and hosting a forum of providers in late 2012 to look at work placement and intern opportunities for students.

Tasman has also started exit interviews of graduates to gauge satisfaction with the courses, teaching, and assessment. The interviews have been supervised by an external contractor and the evidence gathered indicated that students felt well prepared for work or further study. The organisation has also introduced structured workplace conversations three months after programme completion. Tasman attempted to contact 201 students who had left since the end of 2011. Of these, 50 were unable to be contacted and 26 had returned to their home country. Of the remaining 125, 72 per cent were in employment and 18.4 per cent were engaged in further study. Of the Business graduates, 70 per cent were in employment, a good outcome in the current economy. Tasman is able to gain information about the value of the learning and use this to inform future programme development.

Tasman has used the 2011 EER findings to develop an improvement plan which has provided a useful framework for its self-assessment initiatives. While useful improvements have developed from these initiatives, it is too early to conclude that self-assessment is embedded and ongoing.

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**.

Through the regular feedback students provide about their programmes and teachers, and by the way programmes are delivered, it is apparent that Tasman understands student needs well and is mostly meeting those needs. A good example of this is the Design programme which is assessed via nine projects. In combination, these projects form a realistic portfolio of the skills and practical activities that are required to work in a creative design environment. Students also go on field trips and to artists' exhibitions which keeps them stimulated by others' ideas and approaches to design.

Since 2011, Tasman has used information from external stakeholders to improve educational outcomes for students. One way this has been done is by surveying employers to gauge industry developments that may require updates to programme content. The feedback from industry has been for Tasman to concentrate on the practical application of skills to enhance students' employability and work-readiness.

Other changes have been to encourage student involvement in student representative meetings each term. These are also attended by the school principal and provide a forum to share ideas and a way for Tasman to report back on actions taken in response to issues raised by the students. Another example of changes made in response to student feedback was Tasman's response to student frustration with internet speeds. Fibre optic cabling for broadband was installed in October 2012 and activated in November 2012.

Stakeholder engagement at all levels, both internal and external, has allowed Tasman to listen to and better understand the needs of learners, staff, and employers. From this engagement, Tasman has developed key contributing processes (such as job skill workshops that contribute to graduate work-readiness) that are connected to positive learner outcomes. Tasman needs to continue to develop relationships with external stakeholders and use the findings to inform self-assessment, particularly in relation to Tasman's Business programmes.

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**.

Classes are observed by the academic manager on a regular basis and also by peers. These observations are discussed with staff or peers. Staff noted that the observations were useful for observing different methods of delivering content and making the best use of resources, and that they contributed to collegiality through sharing good practice.

Since the 2011 report, all staff have participated in classroom management workshops, moderation training, and self-assessment workshops provided by Tasman. All current academic staff either have, or are working towards completing, adult teaching unit standards, namely 4098 *Use standards to assess candidate performance*, 11551 *Moderate assessments*, and 11552 *Design assessments*. New staff appointed without these standards will work towards completing them within one year of employment. In addition, programme managers are to complete the National Certificate in Adult Education and Training within two years of employment.

Moderation results for Tasman have improved since the last EER in 2011. A combination of approaches has contributed to this, including support from advisory committee members who work at an institute of technology/polytechnic, assistance from external contractors with expertise in moderation, and pre- and post-moderation conducted by Tasman staff. Regular staff meetings occur fortnightly and staff members meet once a month to discuss student progress. These meetings have minutes and agendas, and actions are followed up from one meeting to the next.

Student evaluations in term 2, 2012 showed that students wanted more feedback about their progress. Tasman took the following actions: students were given a list of unit standards they needed to complete and were able to keep a record of their progress, the process for assessing against unit standards was explained more fully, and students were given reports each term showing their unit standard achievement. Tutors also assist students by proofreading their assignments before they are submitted. Students found this approach helpful as it allowed them to submit assignments that were easier to read and more understandable.

Teachers and students relate well to each other. Students commented that the school environment had improved in 2012, that they would recommend the school to their friends, that the teachers had good knowledge of their subjects and were friendly and helpful, and that they would happily approach their teachers with any concerns. Staff also said that Tasman was a much happier place to work at in 2012. They attributed this to upgraded staff facilities, access to good teaching resources, and the 'new environment' where they were included and consulted about all major school decisions.

The adoption of a practical approach to all the programmes Tasman offers, in response to student and industry feedback, has led to more up-to-date, relevant teaching content and approaches. Tasman has supported its teachers to upskill and increase their awareness of adult teaching principles, all of which have enhanced teacher effectiveness. The school needs to continue to be proactive in identifying teachers' individual and collective needs and including all staff in ongoing self-assessment opportunities.

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 **Good**.

Tasman provides appropriate pastoral and student support for international students, including 24/7 access to a Tasman staff member at all times. Staff understanding of the Code of Practice is good, with a dedicated staff member taking responsibility for under 18-year-old students and the code compliance requirements for this age group. In addition, all new staff receive training in the code. All staff members have been part of professional development training on the Code of Practice by Tasman, and two key Tasman staff participated in the professional development provided by the Code Office. The information from these workshops has been disseminated to all staff through internal professional development workshops. The internal training has led to more uniform implementation of procedures and increased awareness of daily requirements of the Code of Practice. It has also led to the updating of Tasman's website when information gaps were identified. Tasman is now confident students are being given comprehensive, accurate, up-to-date information. This was confirmed by the evaluation team's viewing of the website.

Pre-enrolment information is easy to understand, the student handbook is comprehensive, and students' orientation is thorough and includes making them aware of the complaints process and the availability of first language speakers. Both the Code of Practice and the complaints process are displayed on a noticeboard in each classroom. Students reported that staff have an open-door policy and are highly supportive and friendly. Homestay is arranged through a homestay company and Tasman carries out regular checks of the accommodation.

The review of student support services by Tasman highlighted inaccuracies in data input. This was resolved by limiting access to the database to fewer staff and double-checking all entries for inaccuracies. Support staff and academic staff have regular contact to discuss students and to share important information, making the student support more seamless, consistent, and effective.

Tasman's student support is much improved since the 2011 EER, in particular in relation to the regular and student-centred communication between the academic and support staff, the conscious focus on the Code of Practice and its requirements, and the understanding staff members have of each other's role in relation to student guidance and support. Tasman needs to continue to monitor its student support services to ensure it maintains the high standard shown at this evaluation visit.

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 **Good**.

TIA has addressed the issues identified at the last EER, including collecting outcomes data, consultation, and needs analyses with stakeholder groups, and building staff capability around assessment and moderation. To do this the organisation has used some external expertise and has built capability in its staff. This process has been assisted by the appointment of new permanent managerial staff. The increased capability is reflected in the comments, report ratings, and statements of confidence in this report, which are considerably and deservedly more positive than the last report.

Tasman's challenge for the future is to ensure that the processes and procedures it has developed, largely in response to the 2011 report and subsequent improvement plan, are sufficiently robust and well understood by all staff that they continue to be used to develop a better understanding of educational performance. If, as was stated at the EER, 'Quality education is the lifeblood of the organisation', then Tasman is now in a position to embed self-assessment more deeply across all aspects of the business and use the learning from ongoing self-assessment to continue to make worthwhile improvements that will benefit students, staff, the business, and the wider community.

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 **Good**.

2.2 Focus area: Design programme

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Business programmes

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: International student support

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

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those expressed or implied within the report.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of programme approval and accreditation (under sections 249 and 250 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Programmes established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act and published in the Gazette of 28 July 2011 at page 3207. These policies and criteria are deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under the new section 253.

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 programmes they own or provide. These criteria and policies are also deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under section 253. Section 233B(1) of the Act requires registered PTEs to comply with these rules.

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 EER process 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-eer/introduction/>

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