

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: 17 February 2016

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review	5
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	6
Summary of Results	7
Findings	10
Recommendations	18
Appendix	19

MoE Number: 7805
NZQA Reference: C20906
Dates of EER visit: 17, 18 and 19 November 2015

Final Report

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:	Tasman International Academies (Tasman)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 7, 290 Queen Street, Auckland
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	16 June 2006
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Diploma in Business (Level 5)• National Diploma in Business (Level 6)• National Diploma in Computing (Level 5)• Diploma in Information Technology (Support and Operations) (Level 7)• Diploma in Information Systems (Multi-Media) (Level 7)• Tasman International Academy Certificate in English (Level 4)• Tasman International Academy Preparation for IELTS (Level 4)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	778 international students No domestic students Indian 85 per cent

	Chinese 12.5 per cent
	Korean 2 per cent
	Others 0.5 per cent
	Male 80 per cent
	Female 20 per cent
	95 per cent of students are between 18 and 29 years of age.
	Two international students under 18 years.
Number of staff:	21 full-time and 19 part-time staff
Scope of consent to assess:	http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=780573001
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Tasman offers an English language programme for students to develop their language skills in preparation for sitting IELTS (International English Testing System) examinations. This is for students who do not have the required IELTS score (5.5 or 6.0 average) to enter Tasman's level 5, 6 or 7 programmes. NZQA approved this English language programme in 2013.</p> <p>Tasman delivers its business and information technology diploma programmes via two 10-hour days per week.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>A new college principal was appointed in April 2015.</p> <p>The roll has grown significantly since the previous evaluation when Tasman had 89 students.</p> <p>Since the previous evaluation, Tasman has submitted 13 applications for programme approval to NZQA. Four applications have been approved and three are currently being processed.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>This is the fourth external evaluation and review for Tasman. The most recent evaluation was in 2013 and resulted in NZQA being Confident in both educational performance and in organisational capability in self-assessment.</p> <p>NZQA conducts external moderation of assessment. For the last three years, one unit</p>

standard each year in the field of Computing and Economics was determined by NZQA to be not assessed at the national standard, and the assessment materials have required modification to meet the respective unit standards.

Tasman has submitted assessment materials for non-unit standard based information technology courses to Whitireia for external moderation. Documents reviewed during this evaluation showed this material was approved as fit for purpose.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of this evaluation included the mandatory focus area of governance and management, which provides an overview of the strategic and operational levels of the organisation.

The other three focus areas were the:

- National Diploma in Business (Level 6)
- National Diploma in Computing (Level 5)
- Diploma in IT (Support and Operations) (Level 7).

These programmes were selected because approximately half of the 778 students are currently enrolled in the business level 5 and 6 programmes, and a review of the level 6 business programme allowed the evaluation to explore how effective the level 5 programme is due to many students progressing on to level 6. Most of the other students are enrolled in the level 7 IT diploma, which is the most advanced level of education Tasman offers.

A small number of students are enrolled in Tasman International Academy Certificate in Preparation for IELTS (Level 4). This certificate was not included in this evaluation due to the very small number of students.

This scope enabled the evaluation to review the majority of the education provided by Tasman.

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.

Tasman submitted a self-assessment summary and other supporting information in the weeks leading up to the site visit. This information, along with documents and information drawn from Tasman's website and NZQA's database, was used in preparation for the site visit.

Prior to the site visit, the lead evaluator discussed the evaluation by phone with Tasman's principal, to:

- confirm current programmes delivered
- check understanding of evaluative quality assurance
- explore options for the focus areas for this evaluation.

A team of two evaluators visited the delivery site over three days. During the site visit, the team met with the owner-director, the school principal, student support services managers, programme leaders, tutors, and students from each focus area and made phone calls to other stakeholders.

Some graduates were interviewed by the evaluators by phone after the site visit.

The evaluation team reviewed a wide range of Tasman's documents and records to confirm and validate the onsite discussions.

Summary of Results

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

NZQA is **Confident** in both the educational performance and in the capability in self-assessment of **Tasman International Academy**.

The main reasons for this confidence are:

- A high percentage (approximately 90 per cent of students) are completing courses and graduating, exceeding Tasman's internal target of 85 per cent¹.
- Approximately 30 per cent of students gain employment in jobs related to their area of study, indicating the programmes are preparing students for business and information technology roles.
- Tasman's graduate follow-up processes indicates that many students (the range between one programme and another was not completely clear at this evaluation but showed 30 per cent and more graduates gain employment related to their area of study, indicating the programmes are preparing students for business and information technology roles). Many more graduates are in employment but it was unknown if these jobs resulted from skills and knowledge gained from study at Tasman, or employment continuing from their part-time work during study.²
- Attendance rates are high and closely monitored by the school.
- Theory is well linked to practical tasks in an applied learning environment.
- Resources, including computer labs and a library, include up-to-date technology and texts.
- Teaching staff have extensive industry-related experience and appropriate technical qualifications.
- Some teaching staff have gained adult teaching qualifications and some others are working towards this. This is an area for improvement.
- Teaching effectiveness is monitored through annual observations, student surveys on teaching and feedback to staff.
- Staff have appropriate professional development plans and records, which are relevant to their roles.

¹ Tasman's calculations, see further comment under Findings 1.1.

² Ref MBIE report on international student employment compared to other migrants entering on work visas: see <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/publications-research/research/migrants---settlement/integration-retention-skilled-migrants-2015.pdf>

- Assessment tools are moderated before use and assessment decisions are reviewed for consistency by Tasman. Some gaps in these processes indicate internal moderation is an area for further improvement.
- External moderation of assessment by NZQA has identified some areas of recurring problems with unit standard based assessments, specifically assessment materials not addressing all aspects of the unit standards and the assessment judgements not being at the national standard. This indicates possible weaknesses in internal moderation practices, which have not identified these issues. Weaknesses in moderation raise some concerns about the reliability of course achievement rates.
- Tasman submits non-unit standard based assessment materials to Whitireia Polytechnic for moderation. This has confirmed that the materials reviewed are fit-for-purpose and assessment decisions were confirmed as valid.
- Tasman has robust processes to review and confirm its compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. However this evaluation identified one area of concern. This was the late reporting to Immigration New Zealand (INZ) of one student whose enrolment was terminated due to poor attendance.³
- The organisation has clear direction and goals expressed in its strategic and business planning.
- Students' views and levels of satisfaction are surveyed through online and paper-based surveys. Tasman analyses these and results show an overall high level of satisfaction: for example, with teaching, programme, and resourcing. The majority of students interviewed during this evaluation confirmed these findings.
- Student progress is regularly and accurately monitored and recorded. Records are maintained in three electronic systems, raising the risk of human error. Tasman is currently reviewing a new database to bring all student achievement data into one record to reduce the risk of human error.
- Staff and student interviews during this evaluation indicated that Tasman has facilitated open communication processes, allowing staff and students to freely discuss matters as they arise.
- The evaluators observed a reflective culture among staff and organisational self-assessment practices that include a range of checks on the effectiveness of education processes and outcomes. These include following up graduates three to six months after graduation.

³ <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Code-of-Practice-NZQA.pdf> section 9.3

- The evaluation team considers that this evidence allows NZQA to have confidence in both Tasman's educational performance and its capability in organisational self-assessment.

Findings⁴

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**.

Students at Tasman are achieving at consistently high rates. Tasman's self-assessment information indicates that course completion and graduation rates are over 90 per cent across most courses. Tasman is calculating course completions and graduation rates based on the number of students still enrolled at the end of the course, rather than as a percentage of the total enrolments. To make a valid comparison with the rest of the New Zealand tertiary education sector, Tasman needs to account for those who withdraw before completing a course. Withdrawal rates are consistently low (approximately 5 per cent of total enrolments). After including withdrawal rates in the calculation, achievement rates are closer to 80 per cent.

Tasman benchmarks its achievement rates against internal targets of 85 per cent, as well as against published rates on the Education Counts website.⁵ By Tasman's self-assessment measures, student achievement rates exceed these benchmarks. However, as noted above, student achievement rates by the more usual measure are just below those reported on the Education Counts website.

Also, there are some concerns about the rigour of Tasman's internal moderation system: i.e. that it ensures that assessment tools and assessor judgements are fair, valid, consistent and reliable. The evidence to support this concern is that NZQA's external moderation over the last three years has indicated there is a pattern of assessment materials not fully meeting the requirements of the assessment standards: therefore assessor judgements have not been at the national standard. External moderation uses only a small sample of assessment, but it indicates that Tasman's internal checks are not picking these issues up. Therefore, there are some doubts about the reliability of at least some of the student achievement rates.

The organisation's surveys indicate students are reporting high satisfaction with their achievements and that they are also achieving growth in a range of soft skills: for example, confidence in applying their business and information technology skills in New Zealand, and improved critical thinking skills.

⁴ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

⁵ Education Counts website: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data-services/data-collections/national/tertiary_enrolment_data

Overall, students are achieving well, but there are some concerns which Tasman need to address:

- in their self-assessment processes
- to validate the assessments and achievement rates
- to validate the extent to which students are able to apply their new skills and knowledge in their workplace on graduation.

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 **Adequate**.

The value of education is generally strong for students gaining an industry recognised, NZQA-approved qualification, and workplace skills appropriate for business and information technology roles. Some graduates are clearly gaining paid work in related industries and some other students are finding work in unrelated and less skilled roles. Significant proportions of the students on lower level programmes are progressing onto the higher-level programmes at Tasman.

Tasman has systematically gathered and analysed destination data on all their graduates for the past two years. Phone surveys are conducted between three and six months after graduation and these found that 70 per cent of graduates are in employment in 2015 to date. This figure benchmarked favourably against Ministry of Education data showing that 40 per cent of international graduates gain work. While there is some good evaluation work being done, the analysis of destination outcomes varies in depth and quality, and there are some gaps in the organisation's understanding, for example how many graduates are gaining employment related to their area of study after graduating and how many before graduating. The EER team found when looking closely at the data from a recent class of 24 level 7 IT graduates that conservatively around 30 per cent are working in IT roles, and at least 20 per cent are working in unrelated roles. Tasman has surveyed some employers and these results generally confirm the conclusions about work outcomes noted above. However, this data and tutors' knowledge of graduate destinations (through their social networks) could be added to the survey results, to build a stronger picture of graduate outcomes.

It should be noted here that international students gaining employment in New Zealand following study is somewhat dependent on labour market factors and that education providers have a relatively limited ability to ensure graduates gain employment related to their study.

Students interviewed stated that they were able to apply the knowledge and skills gained on the course in their workplace, confirming the student survey results. For example, business students spoke of applying their time management and team skills in their paid work roles.

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**.

Tasman has ensured its programmes include up-to-date content and the information technology programmes use up-to-date software and hardware. They also methodically track the changing education and compliance requirements and make appropriate changes. The computing programme includes a focus on fundamental skills and the information technology programme includes a range of activities that help students apply and develop their learning in business situations. Students interviewed during this evaluation confirmed the organisation's survey results - that the programmes and associated activities match students' learning needs. The students valued the strong practical focus of Tasman programmes, which include a range of hands-on learning. For example, IT students could use software and hardware that are found in the workplace. The organisation has made some improvements based on student feedback: for example, to library resources and Wi-Fi speed.

Students also valued case studies, group work and discussions about their real workplace issues. This supported students to develop critical thinking skills and adapt to the New Zealand teaching style, and better prepared them for working in New Zealand.

Tasman uses a range of surveys to review how well its programmes and activities match students' needs. These surveys consistently show high ratings from students. Students interviewed during this evaluation confirmed the programmes were relevant and that students particularly valued the applied learning. Currently employer response rates are relatively low and alternative processes for gathering employer feedback may be required to provide a more complete set of data for more robust self-assessment.

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**.

Teaching staff have relevant industry experience and appropriate qualifications for the programme level taught. Many staff are migrants to New Zealand, with a similar background to the students, enabling staff to relate well to their students.

Some staff hold adult education qualifications, and some hold what might be considered minimum-level training: for example, some have completed unit standards in teaching competency-based programs and three unit standards related to assessment and moderation (unit standards 4098, 11551, and 11552). This is an area that could receive more attention, broadening staff knowledge and understanding of current good practice in adult learning and teaching environments and methods. All staff demonstrated a passion for learning and teaching, and this was well supported by management staff.

The organisation's choice to deliver its programmes in two 10-hour days is not unique among New Zealand private training establishments. However, the reasons for choosing this model are somewhat unclear, apart from students' stated satisfaction with the training. The value of learning and teaching for 10 hours a day in a language other than students' first language is not well supported by empirical evidence.

As noted, student achievement rates are high, as are the documented attendance rates, and student satisfaction ratings are very high. These factors might indicate that this learning environment is highly effective, but there are some factors challenging this. These include the moderation of assessment and the robustness of processes used to identify students involved in cheating or plagiarism. There are weaknesses in internal pre and post-assessment moderation, as indicated by NZQA's external moderation findings. By its nature external moderation is a very small sample size and any failings at this level are therefore an indication of weaknesses in organisation's internal moderation processes. While the issues identified through external moderation have been adequately addressed in each of the past three years, there was no evidence that these matters are being picked up internally.

Teaching staff discussed cheating and plagiarism, including a range of processes to identify where these may occur. This discussion gave the evaluation team reasonable reassurance in this area.

However, the short time between learning events and assessments on level 5 to 7 programmes allows only minimal time for student reflection and self-directed learning. Students may not have sufficient time to embed the new knowledge. This can result in limiting the depth of learning or a student's understanding of underpinning theory.

The organisation has a range of processes to monitor teaching effectiveness, such as student surveys, teacher observations, peer moderation and close tracking of student progress and achievement. Overall these processes provide a good range of data that is used by Tasman effectively for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching.

While students were very satisfied with the teaching and learning arrangements, the evaluators were not convinced that the two-day teaching model is in fact highly effective.

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**.

Students receive accurate and sufficient information through the organisation's website, recruitment agents and from staff at enrolment. There are no significant gaps in student information. The organisation places a high focus on attendance: evidence presented during this evaluation showed that on average student attendance is close to 90 per cent. Where a student's attendance had dropped to unsatisfactory levels, Tasman was able to show that these students were referred to Immigration New Zealand and the student visas had been cancelled, indicating the organisation was taking appropriate action. Students have a 24/7 phone number they can call in case of emergencies or if they require extra support. Students stated they have contacted staff outside of their two on-site days a week, and received satisfactory extra support, where that was requested.

The evaluators observed an open friendly learning environment. Students and staff appeared to relate easily with each other. Student interviews during this evaluation and organisational surveys showed a high level of student satisfaction with student support and guidance.

Tasman's compliance with The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code) is monitored in some detail and evidence presented during the site visit indicated there were no evident gaps. However subsequent to the visit the evaluators identified one area of concern. This was the late reporting to INZ of one student whose enrolment was terminated due to poor attendance. While this was an isolated event, the Code of Practice requires Code signatories to report immediately to INZ any termination of enrolments. This concern is mitigated by Tasman's normally robust Code checks.

There are currently two under 18-year-old students and the specific Code requirements for this age group are well reviewed and documented within the organisation.

Tasman runs job search seminar days and maintains a notice board with job opportunities. During this evaluation, a group of students attended a job search seminar and stated they felt this was useful.

Tasman facilitates a student council that meets regularly and raises issues with management (such as improving kitchen facilities), issues which Tasman has addressed.

The main self-assessment mechanisms in this area are:

- student surveys and informal, or undocumented, contact with students (all of which is subject to reflection and analysis)
- the formal Code review.

While these provide Tasman with evidence of a good level of student support, student surveys currently cover a small proportion of the 700 students enrolled (approximately 100 students). This limits the value of student surveys, but Tasman is changing this survey to an online process to try and get responses from a larger proportion of the student population.

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**.

Evidence presented during this evaluation indicates that Tasman has a focus on student achievement, pays attention to student attendance, has appointed staff with appropriate skills and qualifications for the level of programmes offered, and has upgraded its facilities and learning resources to ensure they are up-to-date. The organisation has a strategic plan which includes clear goals and a focus on education and business growth.

Management are staying up-to-date with regulatory changes (such as the current Targeted Review of Qualifications) and are preparing to submit programmes to meet the requirements of the new qualifications as they are listed on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

Tasman has a sole owner, supported by a principal (recently changed), and programme leaders for each qualification. This is a flat management structure intended to maintain open and free communication channels. This appears to be the case from the evaluators' observations.

With the growth in student numbers and the organisation planning further growth, the evaluators consider that having further roles in senior management may be

worth considering: for example, establishing an academic board or committee to provide academic oversight of programme development and review.

Management is providing support for staff professional development. As noted above, there is room for giving staff more specific training in adult teaching theory and practice to support those who have not yet gained a qualification in this area.

Tasman is actively using contractors for business and educational advice. The evaluators see this as a vital element to support the sole owner in the absence of a governance board or other structure.

There are a range of self-assessment practices to monitor student achievement and overall governance and management effectiveness. These include a student management system, and regular reviews of students' progress and achievement rates. As noted above, the organisation runs a number of student surveys, some with fairly light return rates which limits their usefulness. However, as noted there are plans to strengthen the processes by putting surveys online to get a higher return rate.

Self-assessment practices essentially cover all key areas of the organisation's operation and are providing a good level of knowledge across the board. This information is regularly reviewed and used to make improvements as noted.

A challenge for Tasman would be to review its current teaching format of two 10-hour days per student group. A review could establish a clear evidence base to ensure that:

- the inherent weaknesses of the format are effectively managed
- this methodology rigorously supports student achievement
- student learning is as effective as under the more usual teaching week of four to five days a week.

A review of the 10-hour day could also consider modifying this approach.

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**.

2.2 Focus area: National Diploma in Business (Level 6).

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: National Diploma in Computing (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: Diploma in IT (Support and Operations) (Level 7)

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Tasman:

- Explore processes to review and establish the extent to which students' post-graduation employment is related to their area of study, and how well learners have been able to apply their new knowledge in the workplace
- Develop processes to explore the value added to students' base knowledge, as some students come with knowledge and experience from work or study in their home country
- Ensure teaching staff gain adult teaching theory and practical skills within a reasonable time of being appointed
- Ensure the planned improvements to the student database and other records are carried out to reduce the risk of human error
- Review the current teaching format of two 10-hour days per student group, to ensure the inherent weaknesses are effectively managed or to consider modifying this approach.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz