

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Auckland English Academy (1988)  
Limited trading as Auckland English  
Academy

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 9 May 2018

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*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:	Auckland English Academy (1988) Limited trading as Auckland English Academy
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	17 February 2010
Location:	Levels 1-3, 10-14 Lorne Street, Auckland
Delivery sites:	As above
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English for Speakers of Other Languages</li><li>• TESOL<sup>1</sup> Course for Non-native Speaker Teachers of English</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	International: 1080 (386 equivalent full-time students in 2017). Brazil 23 per cent, China 18 per cent, Korea 13 per cent, Japan 12 per cent, Chile 7 per cent  Domestic: nil
Number of staff:	30 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The two currently delivered courses as above</li></ul>

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<sup>1</sup> Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

- TESOL Course (Introductory)

Distinctive characteristics:	Auckland English Academy is a member of the ICL Education Group, <sup>2</sup> within which its primary role is to deliver general English classes.
Recent significant changes:	Auckland English Academy began delivering evening classes in late 2015, which now have more enrolments than the daytime classes. The school moved into shared premises with other ICL Group schools in 2017.
Previous quality assurance history:	The previous external evaluation and review (EER), conducted in February 2014, concluded that NZQA was Highly Confident in the educational performance and Confident in the capability in self-assessment of the school. The most recent English New Zealand audit, conducted in December 2017, found that Auckland English Academy had met all the required standards.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of this EER had two focus areas: -

- International Student Support and Wellbeing. This is a mandatory focus area for an education organisation enrolling international students.
- Communication English.<sup>3</sup> This is the prime focus of the school, with 89 per cent of the 2017 students enrolling, for varying durations, in general English classes.

## 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.*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://icleducation.ac.nz/index.php/about-us/>

<sup>3</sup> The formal programme title is English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

The two evaluators spent two days at the school interviewing the three directors, various managers, seven teachers, marketers, those responsible for student pastoral care, as well as 10 students. The team reviewed a wide range of documentation, the school's website as well as randomly selected student enrolment and academic records and the files of contracted agents.

### *Disclaimer*

*The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.*

*For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:*

- *Identify organisational fraud<sup>4</sup>*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

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<sup>4</sup> NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Auckland English Academy Limited**.

There is comprehensive evidence of Auckland English Academy systematically identifying needs and developing effective responses that consistently meet the important needs of its students and other key stakeholders. The important needs are improved language proficiency and an enjoyable and safe learning experience. The key points supporting this conclusion are:

- High quality and reliable achievement information clearly demonstrates the improved language development of nearly all (96 per cent) of Auckland English Academy students since September 2017. Student feedback consistently shows that nearly all find their classes enjoyable and would recommend the school. Around 90 per cent say the course would help them with their future. Auckland English Academy actively monitors and responds to lower ratings. The overall rating of the school in the 2016 i-Graduate English Language Barometer (i-grad) survey was well above the average New Zealand and global rates.
- The directors and managers are capable and knowledgeable leaders who effectively promote high quality educational achievement. Strong relationships are maintained with key stakeholders. Across all key activities, the school systematically gathers typically relevant and reliable evidence which is thoughtfully and methodically reviewed to inform operational decisions and develop strategic plans. There are regular and robust departmental reviews which are reported to the directors. The evaluators saw a wide range of improvements arising from this evaluative approach. Key improvements include a revised organisational structure, moving into shared premises (with other ICL Group schools), upgraded classroom technology, shared services and procedures, and strengthened moderation practices.
- The excellent educational achievement is founded on the all-round quality of the academic processes. The English New Zealand audit concluded that the school met all standards, and commended its six-weekly assessment tests and reports and how well these are used to support individual learning. Teachers are appropriately qualified and there are strong processes supporting consistent performance, including professional development. Curriculum, teaching resources and technology have been regularly reviewed and improved.
- Effective pastoral care processes support nearly all Auckland English Academy students to stay engaged and achieve and enjoy their studies. There are clear and documented processes supporting student wellbeing. Student feedback is

positive about the support received from pastoral staff and teachers. The annual review of the Code of Practice<sup>5</sup> was robust, identifying and addressing areas for improvement. Auckland English Academy has a systematic and effective approach to managing its key compliance accountabilities.

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<sup>5</sup> Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016

# Findings<sup>6</sup>

## 1.1 How well do students achieve?

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 **Excellent**.

Auckland English Academy students enrol in the English classes to develop their general English language proficiency. An internal review of all six-weekly test results from September 2017 to February 2018 found nearly all students (96 per cent) had achieved a pass of 50 per cent, and most (68 per cent) had scored more than 70 per cent. Individual academic portfolios randomly sampled by the evaluators convincingly demonstrated the progress these students were making in line with the expectations of the school. This is high quality assessment information and exemplary achievement.

The recent English New Zealand audit formally commended the overall quality and validity of the six-weekly assessment testing and reporting. Further, it reported how well the teachers used this individual information to support further learning. For example, as each student progresses into a new class, their new teacher receives an in-depth academic portfolio, which enables teaching that builds on each student's language proficiency. The managers also monitor the quality of these portfolios and the progress that students are making. Consistently, most (over 85 per cent) of the students agree or strongly agree that their course had helped them achieve their goals.

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

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 **Excellent**.

Over time, Auckland English Academy has provided its students and agents outcomes of clear and significant value. As a 'pure' language school<sup>7</sup>, Auckland

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<sup>6</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Registration-and-accreditation/External-evaluation/eng-nz-qa-arrangements.pdf>



English Academy regards improved English proficiency as a primary outcome for students. As noted in Findings 1.1, nearly all students gain this outcome. Auckland English Academy students identify overlapping reasons for learning general English: to support their career; to help them work while studying in New Zealand; for leisure purposes; as a pathway to higher school; and to support possible immigration or future tertiary studies. Close to 90 per cent of the 2016 and 2017 exiting students agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them progress towards their post-course objectives ('helped them with their future').

The second key outcome is the students are satisfied with their learning experience at the school. Nearly all students from the last two years stated 'the classes were enjoyable and they 'would recommend the school to my friends'. The latest i-grad survey rating of the students' overall experience at Auckland English Academy was 91 percent, which was higher than the New Zealand (87 per cent) and global (87 per cent) rating. The evaluators interviewed a random sample of 10 students who unanimously agreed that the school offered high quality English tuition and an experience they were enjoying. Another indicator of value for students and agents is the school retaining a small and stable number of agents in their long-established markets, who have referred students over an extended period.<sup>8</sup> Auckland English Academy has a clear and detailed understanding of the value the school delivers, which is informed, in part, by management regularly and actively monitoring student feedback. One self-assessment gap is that the school does not systematically attempt to track the post-study outcomes of the TESOL students<sup>9</sup>, who typically have a longer-term career goal of teaching English to younger students.

### 1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

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 **Excellent**.

Auckland English Academy's programmes and activities consistently match the needs of its students. The English New Zealand audit found the curriculum and course delivery met and at times exceeded the industry standard. Auckland English Academy has coherent class curricula with clear learning outcomes aligned with the recognised Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

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<sup>8</sup> Many of these agents have referred for over five and some more than 10 years.

<sup>9</sup> TESOL made up just 1 per cent of the 2017 student enrolment.

The weekly teacher record and individual student academic portfolios show that the curricula guide the classroom delivery and assessment taking place. Teachers are rotated across different language levels. The curricula, resources and assessment tools are periodically and robustly reviewed and updated to ensure they are appropriate and reflect current industry good practice. For example, the school's review of the curriculum led to a published article in a relevant academic journal. There is a clear and well-documented professional development programme with teacher observation informing individual professional development plans.

The class placement tests are typically an accurate, robust measure of language ability, with nearly all students going on to pass their six-weekly class level assessment tests (see Findings 1.1). Those not passing are given academic counselling and are aware of the improvement needed. The school conducts sound and appropriate moderation practices, which includes another ICL Group English language school moderating some assessments; this initiative informed an AEA presentation to an ESOL<sup>10</sup> teaching conference. Staff interviewed were enthusiastic about the moderation processes and how they informed their teaching practice. The English New Zealand audit found Auckland English Academy had met the industry standard for appropriately qualified staff despite the growing student numbers. The school also carefully analyses and responds to any patterns of unfavourable feedback that emerge from the regular student surveys.

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

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 **Excellent**.

Auckland English Academy effectively supports its students to stay engaged, to learn and complete their studies, and to enjoy their time at the school. The key components of the Auckland English Academy approach are established and detailed formal roles and procedures, capable teachers and pastoral staff, regular student feedback and robust reviews. The school has well-developed pastoral systems that identify and track individual student needs. Individual student files the evaluators sampled demonstrate that individual learning plans are being reviewed and scheduled catch-ups are taking place. They also showed where pastoral care needs had been identified and staff had responded.

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<sup>10</sup> English for Speakers of Other Languages

Students give consistent feedback that their teachers and the office staff are supportive. The school has responded to the needs of the growing evening class enrolments by extending the opening hours of the café and rostering an academic manager and pastoral staff at night. An action plan for support services was developed in 2017 which was informed by a review of the 2016 Code of Practice. Clearer and more measurable objectives have been identified that particularly focus on improving wellbeing and safety outcomes for the students and enhancing the current student feedback mechanisms. Other recent improvements include accessing knowledge and expertise regarding mental health and learning disabilities.

### 1.5 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 **Excellent**.

Governance and management has been effective in supporting a high level of educational achievement over an extended period. Auckland English Academy has a clear role in offering quality English tuition and an enjoyable (and safe) learning experience. The school is ably and strategically led by three experienced, knowledgeable and complementary ICL Group directors. The recent English New Zealand audit report rated Auckland English Academy as 'very professionally run', and this evaluation concurs with that finding. Auckland English Academy benefits from the significant economies of scale of the wider ICL Group which include shared facilities, marketing and the enrolment processes, financial and human resource management, health and safety planning, and integrated pastoral care. There is clear investment in key resources, including teaching resources, upgraded classroom technology and a café.

Auckland English Academy has capable academic leadership which meets English New Zealand industry standards. For example, the director of studies identified the need for an assistant director to meet the demands arising from increasing enrolments, and this was actioned. An independent staff engagement survey is being developed which would strengthen Auckland English Academy leadership's understanding of how well staff are supported in their work roles. The teachers the evaluators interviewed said their roles were demanding, but that the school was well organised and offered a significant level of support, and that ongoing improvements were being made.

Auckland English Academy is a reflective and responsive organisation focused on improving performance. The school periodically and systematically gathers typically high quality performance data across all key activities. The leadership

draws on its long-term institutional knowledge and information gathered from its stakeholder relationships and markets, to thoughtfully and methodically review performance, make operational decisions and develop strategic plans. The evaluators saw a wide range of improvements arising from this evaluative approach, many of which have been noted in this report.

## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

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

Auckland English Academy takes a systematic approach to effectively managing its key compliance accountabilities. The school's leadership maintains active relationships with key statutory and industry bodies<sup>11</sup> to stay current and compliant with the changing regulatory environment. The recent English New Zealand audit found the school had met all required industry standards. The teachers are appropriately qualified and the assessment practices are robust. The school has in place a range of established and documented formal procedures which are periodically reviewed. The evaluators' random sampling of student enrolment records and academic records, assessment samples and contracted agent files identified no significant gaps.

ICL Group conducted a methodical review of the Code of Practice across all the schools in 2017. Key pastoral care processes are integrated across the group. The key findings were that the schools (including Auckland English Academy) were compliant with the 10 outcomes of the code, although there was some variation in performance. Key recent improvements were a more systematic health and safety monitoring framework and the development of a more planned approach to student support services (noted in Findings 1.4). The review identified a range of actions to be taken, including scheduling periodic reviews of all key activities and strengthening the monitoring of agents and the school-level reporting of attendance rates. While there are clearly many benefits from integrating pastoral care across the ICL Group, it is important to identify, actively monitor and report on any pastoral challenges that are particular to Auckland English Academy. For example, Auckland English Academy has more students studying in evening classes and a higher proportion of students under 18 years of age. Neither the recent annual Code of Practice review nor the six-monthly reports to the board focused on any Auckland English Academy-specific pastoral issues and how well these had been

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<sup>11</sup> Including English New Zealand, NZQA and Immigration New Zealand.

addressed, although the annual English New Zealand self-assessment did to some extent. Auckland English Academy said there were no significant legal or ethical issues facing the organisation.

## Focus Areas

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

### 2.1 Focus area: International Students: Support and Wellbeing

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

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

### 2.2 Focus area: Communication English

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

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

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Auckland English Academy:

- More systematically attempt to track the post-study outcomes of the TESOL students.
- Identify, monitor and report on any pastoral issues that are particular to Auckland English Academy students (as distinguished from other ICL Group schools).

# 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](http://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/>.*

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