External Evaluation and Review Report

School of Audio Engineering (NZ) Limited trading as SAE Institute

Date of report: 20 August 2019

About School of Audio Engineering (NZ) Limited trading as SAE Institute

SAE Institute (SAE) provides training for the creative media industries, offering diplomas and degrees in audio engineering, music production and filmmaking.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	12 Heather Street, Auckland
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	233 domestic students (183 EFTS[1]) including 27 (14 per cent) Māori and 27 (15 per cent) Pasifika; four international students (2 EFTS)
Number of staff:	17 full-time and eight part-time staff
TEO profile:	See: NZQA – School of Audio Engineering (NZ) SAE is part of global network SAE Technology Group Holdings BV, a subsidiary of Navitas Ltd.[2]
Last EER outcome:	In 2015, NZQA was Highly Confident in SAE's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	• Governance and management[3] • Diploma in Screen Production (Level 5) and Bachelor of Screen Production (Level 7)
MoE number:	8174
NZQA reference:	C34769
Dates of EER visit:	5-7 June 2019

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[1] Equivalent full-time students

[2] At the time of the external evaluation and review (EER), a possible change of ownership had been notified to NZQA.

[3] Includes international students: support and wellbeing

Summary of Results

SAE is a student-centred institute with strong connections to creative industries and an innovative approach to programme design and delivery. Highly effective leadership and self-assessment practices underpin excellent educational performance.

	• SAE has maintained high-quality educational provision during a period of significant change, including the review and redevelopment of all programmes and organisational restructuring.
Highly Confident in educational performance	• Highly effective, ongoing engagement with stakeholders ensures students gain relevant skills, knowledge and personal attributes for careers in rapidly changing creative industries.
	• All student groups are achieving strong pass rates, supported by an engaging and student-centred learning environment, an innovative curriculum and effective teaching and assessment practices.
Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment	• Academic leadership is strong, and related processes and documentation are effective in maintaining academic standards and integrity.
	• Teachers are all active in creative industries and are well supported to build teaching and research capability. Research activity informs teaching.
	• SAE has a collaborative, reflective culture and open and inclusive communication practices. Self-assessment is well embedded at all levels of the organisation. Systematic gathering and analysis of information informs decision-making.
	• Investment in facilities, equipment and staffing reflects academic developments, rapidly changing technology and industry standards, and student feedback.
	• SAE's management of important compliance accountabilities is systematic and effective.

Final

Key evaluation question findings[4]

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Most students at SAE are passing courses and completing qualifications. There is an upward trend in overall course completions (from 79 per cent in 2016 to 88 per cent in 2018). This trend is also evident for the focus area programmes (see Appendix 1). Following a dip in performance in 2016, SAE increased student support services and began to review and redesign all programmes. There is a correlation with improved rates for Māori and Pasifika.[5] In 2018, pass rates were consistently strong across all student groups. SAE sets internal targets (88 per cent in 2018) and reviews trends and the relative performance of different learner groups. Performance is also benchmarked against Tertiary Education Commission commitments (82 per cent in 2018) and against other providers – SAE performs well in comparison with five other providers of similar programmes. Monitoring of achievement-related information occurs throughout the year at programme committees, examiners board meetings and by the academic board, including the outcomes of moderation. In addition to theoretical knowledge and technical skills, professional attitudes and behaviours and transferable skills are intentionally developed and formally assessed.
Conclusion:	SAE closely monitors the quality of assessment, pass rates, and staff and student feedback to understand achievement. High course completion rates for new programmes from trimester one 2019 are consistent with achievement trends.

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[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] Course completion increased from 82 per cent in 2018 to 86 per cent in 2018 for Māori, and from 63 per cent in 2017 to 86 per cent in 2018 for Pasifika.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	SAE has strong connections to the creative industries arising from the creative practice and personal networks of staff, and formal and informal engagement with employers, industry professionals (including SAE's creative industries advisory group) and other education providers. Discussions and feedback gathered through interviews confirm the high value and relevance of outcomes for students and employers. According to a recent graduate destination survey[6], approximately 48 per cent of respondents are in full-time employment and 39 per cent are working as freelance contractors. Approximately 69 per cent are working in the same or related field as their study. Nearly 90 per cent confirmed they would recommend SAE as a place to study. Graduate employment information was gathered in previous years, but there was little evidence of analysis. New programme development was informed by extensive stakeholder consultation and market research. Work-integrated learning, professional practice courses and a focus on collaboration and the creative process (rather than specific technologies) have been included to prepare work-ready graduates for a rapidly changing industry. SAE is seeking to strengthen connections with iwi leaders to enhance the value and relevance of the programmes to Māori.
Conclusion:	SAE has strong support from industry and evidence of the value of legacy programmes and the good quality of graduates. Moving forward, a more systematic approach to gathering graduate and industry feedback would enable new programme outcomes to be evaluated in relation to the original needs and objectives identified during programme design.

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[6] During December 2018 and January 2019, 191 graduates responded to a survey (a response rate of 28 per cent from 676 contactable SAE graduates from the previous 18 years).

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	A thorough and comprehensive review and consultation process informed SAE's development of six new programmes for delivery from 2019.[7] At the same time, SAE has maintained appropriate links with key advisors and well-documented academic processes to maintain the quality of legacy programmes. The new programmes are innovative and based on a revised teaching and learning framework. Key elements are structured delivery over three trimesters using a project-based learning methodology, inter- and intra-disciplinary collaborative practice, and work-integrated learning to build transferable skills. The development of creative, research and professional skills is assessed through creative portfolios for each course or project. The new assessment approach is well documented, including rubrics and guidelines for recognising individual achievement within group projects. Teachers are well qualified and all are professionally active in the audio, music or film industries. They are well supported to develop their teaching effectiveness and research capabilities. Highly effective self-assessment involves staff, students and academic leadership at all key points, and includes regular course and programme reviews, moderation planning and reporting, and analysis of student and staff feedback. Comprehensive records provide credible evidence of improvements year on year.
Conclusion:	New programmes incorporate an innovative approach to teaching and learning. Students benefit from the academic and creative capabilities of their teachers. A collaborative and continuous improvement approach is evident and effective in ensuring stakeholder needs are understood and matched.

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[7] From 2019, SAE is delivering six new programmes leading to New Zealand diplomas (level 5) and Bachelor's degrees in each of the three disciplines: audio, music and screen production. Legacy programmes are being taught out during 2019.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Students benefit from small classes and an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Studio supervisors and technicians play an important role in supporting student learning. The practical and collaborative focus of programme delivery enables students to build creative and social networks which are not only vital for their learning but important for their future professional life.
	Staff report that project-based learning provides increased opportunities for students to receive individualised attention and feedback. Improved engagement of students with their learning is also evident. Students have a good understanding of the assessment process and what is required to pass.
	Staff are accessible and approachable. Students' views are regularly sought through surveys and focus groups, a board of studies for class representatives, and an ideas wall. Findings are shared with key groups and examples of responses were noted.
	Support services include dedicated roles for priority groups[8], access to counselling, and support for social activities. From 2019, all new students meet with support staff and the newly appointed careers advisor. At these meetings, learning needs and study goals are discussed. Processes for attendance monitoring have been strengthened and support is provided to assist students to catch up if required. SAE maintains good records of student communications and support interventions.
	Appropriate support is available for the small number of international students, although orientation materials could be strengthened. SAE has also introduced female-centred support activities (in 2019, only 36 out of 237 students are female).
Conclusion:	Students are well supported to remain engaged in all aspects of their study programme. Student feedback is valued and acted

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[8] Approximately 30 per cent of students identify as Māori or Pasifika. In 2018, 9 per cent of students were international. Two dedicated support roles were introduced in 2017.

| | upon. There is good evidence of continuous improvement. |

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	SAE has effective linkages to the SAE Global network, including governance and academic board members who contribute to the direction and oversight of the organisation. Since the previous EER, SAE has undergone significant change, leading to the launch of six new programmes in 2019. The success of the process is attributable to highly effective management and communication practices.
	Academic leadership is strong. SAE has effective processes for gathering information from a wide range of sources to inform academic decision-making and monitoring of academic quality.
	Teachers have Master's or higher degrees and are all active researchers. An effective professional development mechanism has been established for building collaboration among teachers.[9] A recent staff survey indicated high levels of engagement.
	A sustainable business model has seen modest growth, consistent with funding and space limitations, and significant investment in facilities and a comprehensive array of studio equipment for audio, music and screen productions.
	SAE continues to improve through self-assessment. A dashboard supports monitoring of key educational performance indicators. An online meeting register of agenda papers and minutes efficiently facilitates information-sharing and decision-making. New software is providing real-time information on equipment usage and informing purchasing priorities.
Conclusion:	SAE has maintained strong educational achievement across its programmes during significant change. Management and staff are positively engaged in a shared vision for SAE, stakeholders and students. Self-assessment is comprehensive and embedded at all levels of the organisation.

[9] 'Aku Atu, Ako Mai, Kaiako collaborating, learners collaborating', funded by Ako Aotearoa, March 2019

Final

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	SAE has appropriate processes for managing academic standards and integrity. These include ongoing programme reviews; moderation processes; monitoring programme delivery and student learning hours for consistency with NZQA programme approvals; and effective processes and record-keeping for responding to student complaints. SAE maintains a risk register and clear delegations for decision-making by governance and management. Information from funding and regulatory agencies is monitored. Six-monthly reviews of compliance with the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice (2016) are conducted in collaboration with the international student recruitment arm of SAE Global. Key internal documentation, such as the quality management system, is subject to ongoing reviews and updating. Comprehensive processes and reporting meet legislative obligations, including the Health and Safety at Work Act 2016 and copyright law of New Zealand. A comprehensive compliance checklist, which will populate a compliance calendar, is under development. A routine Tertiary Education Commission audit in 2016 against the investment plan and funding rules identified minor errors which were all addressed; a 2018 audit had no findings or recommendations. A review of international student files revealed two breaches of the Code's requirement that students hold appropriate insurance at all times, and one minor breach of Rule 18 (NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules) for English proficiency.
Conclusion:	SAE has generally effective processes for managing key areas of compliance. Careful attention to requirements for the enrolment of international students is required.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance and management

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	SAE benefits from the ability to share best practice and access resources and support from other parts of the SAE Global network. SAE performs well in benchmarking of student and staff satisfaction surveys across the group, and is considered leading edge in some of its recent programme redesign (including the teaching and learning framework).
Conclusion:	SAE benefits from its global connections with a large network of creative industry training providers.

2.2 Focus area: Diploma in Screen Production (leading to the New Zealand Diploma in Screen Production (Level 5) and Bachelor of Screen Production (Level 7))[10]

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Screen production is now the largest of the three disciplines, having grown significantly since the previous EER. There is some structured content to prepare students for working in New Zealand's bicultural context. SAE is considering how to achieve greater diversity in the student population for this focus area. SAE has made changes inside the existing programme approval, to add value and innovation to the legacy film degree (Bachelor of Film Arts), to increase student engagement and to strengthen learner outcomes.

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[10] This focus area included the legacy programmes, Diploma in Film Making (Level 5) and Bachelor of Film Arts (Level 7). The degree was first delivered in 2016 and is being taught out in 2019.

	Examples of these changes include the introduction of project-based learning, increasing opportunities for creative outputs, and inter-disciplinary collaboration. Interviews with the students in the final year of the degree indicate that these initiatives have largely been successful, and they are satisfied with their learning experience.
Conclusion:	Initial problems encountered with the legacy degree were resolved promptly to the greatest extent possible inside the programme approval. This was noted in degree monitor reports. SAE is closely monitoring staff and student feedback on the newly launched diploma and degree.

Improvements and refinements to learning activities and assessment are being identified and, where required, formal changes are referred to the academic board for approval. Strong self-assessment processes provide assurance of SAE continuing to deliver well to meet the needs of screen production stakeholders and students. |

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Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

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

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

SAE is required to ensure full compliance with the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016, and Rule 18 (NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules) for English proficiency.

Appendix 1

Table 1. Diploma in Film Making (Level 5) completion rates with student numbers in brackets[11]

	2016	2017	2018
Course completion – all SAC students	87% (23)	98% (20	92% (43)
Course completion – Māori	78% (6)	100% (1)	57% (7)
Course completion – Pasifika	75% (3)	0% (1)	100% (7)
Qualification completion – all SAC students	60%	67%	90%

Table 2. Bachelor of Film Arts (Level 7) completion rates with student numbers in brackets

	2016	2017	2018
Course completion – all SAC students	79% (9)	78% (10)	100% (11)
Course completion – Māori	100% (1)	100% (1)	100% (1)
Course completion – Pasifika	50% (3)	50% (2)	- (0)
Qualification completion – all SAC students	0%[12]	90%	138%

Data from SAE dashboard summaries derived from *Nga Kete.*

Small numbers of priority group students and international students preclude meaningful analysis of data for those cohorts in the focus area programmes.

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[11] No achievement data is included for international students due to very small numbers – one student enrolled for the diploma in 2018; three students enrolled for the degree in 2016.

[12] First year of delivery, no graduates.

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. 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[13]*

- *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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[13] NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission 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.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*

- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*

- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, training schemes and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016. 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). All rules cited above are available at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/.

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