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External Evaluation and Review Report

Alpha Educational Institute

Date of report: 9 November 2020

About Alpha Educational Institute

Alpha Educational Institute (AEI) is a private training establishment (PTE) offering English preparation and business programmes to international students.

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| Type of organisation: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| Location: | Level 5, 75 Karangahape Road, Auckland 19 Sheffield Crescent, Burnside, Christchurch |
| Code of Practice signatory: | Yes |
| Number of students: | International: 186.33 (94) equivalent full-time students; 36 per cent Latin American; 34 per cent Indian; 11 per cent Nepalese; 6 per cent Other European; 5 per cent Filipino; 4 per cent Chinese; 3 per cent Other South East Asian; 1 per cent Japanese; 1 per cent Other Asian No domestic students |
| Number of staff: | 14.5 full-time equivalents |
| TEO profile: | See NZQA: Alpha Educational Institute |
| Last EER outcome: | Confident in educational performance and capability in self-assessment in 2016 |
| Scope of evaluation: | English for Academic and General Purposes (Training Scheme) (Level 4) (EAGP) Diploma in Business Management (Level 7) (with specialisations in Brand Management, Business Information Technology, and Digital Ubiquitous Marketing) (DBM7) International Student Support and Wellbeing |
| MoE number: | 8491 |
| NZQA reference: | C38417 |
| Dates of EER visit: | 18 and 19 August 2020 (virtual) |

Summary of Results

AEI is a capable and strongly performing training establishment. Students achieve well and value the outcomes of employment or further study. Self-assessment practice is embedded across both campuses and informs developmental change. AEI has shown its responsiveness and agility through recent challenges in the sector.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- AEI has strong programme and qualification completion rates in the DBM7 and positive progression rates for students in the EAGP programme.
- Students value the programmes and gain valuable skills. Many students gain relevant employment.
- AEI has adapted its learning environment appropriately in response to challenges to the business.
- Students are well supported by a dedicated student support team and appropriate systems and processes.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Programme content is relevant and meets the needs of both students and stakeholders. Greater emphasis on relationships with employers and industry is an area under development.
- Self-assessment activities are effective in informing necessary change and development. Some areas need further attention, including survey design, staff appraisals and associated training.
- Student satisfaction levels have recently increased from high to very high, and students are engaged. Teaching staff are valued and effective.
- Appropriate decisions have been made to ensure the business remains viable and innovative in keeping up with sector changes. Governance and management remain effective in supporting student achievement.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Students successfully complete courses and gain qualifications. The Diploma in Business Management (Level 7) (DBM7) has continued to show strong course and qualification achievement rates since the previous evaluation. Currently tracking at 86 per cent for 2020, qualification completions were 100 per cent in 2017, 89 per cent in 2018, and 94 per cent in 2019. Achievement rates exceed targets set by the PTE which factors in the Tertiary Education Commission rates for retention, course, and qualification completions. Internal key performance indicators also factor into the setting of achievement targets.</p> <p>Similarly for course completions of the DBM7, rates have remained high at 100 per cent in 2017, 93 per cent in 2018, and 94 per cent in 2019. AEI is projecting a 94 per cent pass rate in 2020.</p> <p>Internal moderation practice and external moderation support the reliability and validity of assessment and achievement.</p> <p>Some students have prior learning in business from outside of New Zealand. The students gain skills in understanding and effectively communicating in the New Zealand business context (often in English as a second language).</p> <p>The English for Academic and General Purposes (EAGP) achievement rates are also positive.</p> <p>A standardised test is used in the EAGP to test students at enrolment, and students are regularly tested throughout their study to ascertain their progress. Most students showed improvement in English language competency levels in both 2018 and 2019. Student feedback confirmed that their English</p> |

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

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| | <p>language abilities have improved throughout their study.</p> <p>AEI has sound tracking processes for both programmes. The PTE understands outliers and anticipates discrepancies to inform support interventions.</p> <p>Student achievement data is disseminated to senior management through departmental reports. Further, AEI has analysed why student achievement data is positive, and has used the results to inform decision-making and developments across programmes and departments.</p> |
| Conclusion: | <p>Overall, AEI maintains excellent completion rates across both programmes. Monitoring of progression and course completions supports student achievement. Academic quality processes supporting the reliability of achievement and data are robust.</p> |

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

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| Performance: | Good |
| Self-assessment: | Good |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>AEI offers international students the opportunity to gain skills and a qualification preparing them for future work in New Zealand, which is the goal of most students.</p> <p>The DBM7 is of value to students seeking employment in management roles after study. Graduates value the qualification's recognition by industry; some graduates gain management positions. Seventy-eight per cent of students responded to the graduate destination outcomes survey. Of them, 43 per cent confirmed that they went into management roles after graduating. Fifty-five per cent of graduates as a whole were employed in relevant employment.</p> <p>Student feedback showed that individuals feel confident about entering a New Zealand workplace in a business management role. AEI is working towards a deeper analysis of qualitative data as job titles are not always an indicator of management duties within the roles graduates secure.</p> <p>Some graduates have been promoted as a direct result of completing the qualification. Graduate interviews conducted by NZQA indicated clear alignment between content and realistic</p> |

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| | <p>working conditions.</p> <p>English language development and acquisition are aligned to individual student goals. Students are often motivated to complete the training scheme to sit the IELTS² examination. Some students move on to further study or employment.³</p> <p>Beyond attainment of the diploma, English language and work skills, students gain experience living and working in New Zealand and forming peer relationships with other international students.</p> <p>Self-assessment of graduate outcomes is still in development; industry connections and employer input would further strengthen this area. AEI is working towards using industry advisors and establishing an effective industry advisory board.</p> <p>Analysis of data is still informing improvements; management is reflective in making improvements to the graduate destination survey.</p> |
| Conclusion: | <p>Students value the outcomes gained in the programme offerings. Employment is the most valuable outcome for students in the DBM7 programme, as well as progression to further study or gaining the required IELTS score for students in the EAGP Training Scheme. Self-assessment in this area is good, but further development is underway.</p> |

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

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Good |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Programme design is appropriately matched to the needs of students and employers. The continuous improvements to the student management system has enhanced the teaching and learning experience for staff and students.</p> <p>Academic integrity is maintained through the student</p> |

² International English Language Testing System

³ Sixty-three per cent of graduates surveyed in 2020 are studying or employed, 35 per cent of graduates surveyed have returned home, as their goal was the learning experience.

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| | <p>management system online assessments. AEI is continuously reflecting on innovative ways to use online delivery and assessment.</p> <p>Internal and external moderation practice and processes are robust. A moderation component or function was recently added to the student management system, where six assessment papers are randomly selected (two high, two mid-, two low-range) which decreases subjectivity in the moderation process.</p> <p>In 2018, AEI implemented a teaching and learning strategy as part of an organisational focus on defining the student experience. The strategy identifies ways to improve teaching approaches and effectiveness, with a focus on the learning environment and improved teaching practice. Self-directed learning is now more aligned with the teaching and learning strategy because self-assessment practice is focused on meeting the needs of the students.</p> <p>Students confirmed an interactive learning experience after management strengthened the student-centred approach to learning.</p> <p>Ongoing self-assessment of programme relevance informs programme design and delivery changes. After reviewing their approved New Zealand Certificate in English Language, AEI found the EAGP was better suited to the target group of learners. Such identification of learner needs is at the forefront of business planning.</p> <p>Relationships with stakeholders inform programme content and workforce requirements. AEI seeks advice from appointed industry advisors who were also involved in the development of the DBM7 qualification. However, the industry advisory board is not yet functioning to its full potential. AEI has a plan to work with employers to further strengthen industry links.</p> <p>Teaching and learning activities reflect real-world contexts through cases studies, guest lecturers and education outside the classroom. Students and teaching staff reported a desire to connect further with businesses through field trips, assessments and projects.</p> <p>The use of surveys and question design is currently being reviewed by management to gain better analysis of data.</p> |
| <p>Conclusion:</p> | <p>Programmes are comprehensively and regularly reviewed to meet the needs of students and stakeholders. Ongoing self-</p> |

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| | review informs improvement and innovation in matching needs. Some areas need further development, particularly in relation to employer and industry engagement. Students are benefiting from the recent changes to assessment and delivery. |
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1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Students are very well supported at AEI during their studies, both online and face to face. The recent move to online learning was seamless for students through effective student support.</p> <p>In 2019, the student support services team was restructured to distribute the student support roles across the organisation, with the marketing team as the student support hub. Student support is always available for academic and pastoral matters. Student surveys have reported higher satisfaction with pastoral care support and the overall student experience since the team's restructure.</p> <p>AEI offers many avenues for students to seek support and advice. The student ambassador is a useful support mechanism for students, allowing them to be more closely linked to governance. The role has also strengthened peer-to-peer relationships. Although fairly new, the role is well utilised and appreciated by staff and students.</p> <p>Student voice is well heard through student-centred strategies and is incorporated into the day-to-day functioning of student support services.</p> <p>The Code of Practice⁴ policies and processes are effectively embedded across the organisation and support strong pastoral care initiatives.</p> <p>Students have access to external support through workshops on resume writing, job-seeking and interviewing. Students appreciate these services to further support their academic and professional goals.</p> |

⁴ The Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice
<https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/education-code-of-practice/>

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| Conclusion: | Student support is exemplary. International students are understood and appropriately cared for academically and pastorally. This contributes to excellent achievement. |
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1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Good |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>AEI is an agile and innovative training establishment. The organisational purpose and direction are clear through the application of organisational values: 'excellence, innovation, anticipation' which are embedded across outputs and throughout self-assessment practice.</p> <p>Further, AEI makes smart and informed business decisions in anticipation of and response to business and sector challenges. A recent restructure of the organisation proved to be successful in supporting student achievement and the overall student experience.</p> <p>Student satisfaction levels have recently increased (from already high levels of satisfaction) because of the organisational change and the decision to distribute responsibility for student support across all staff. Decision-making is transparent and communicated clearly to staff and students. Management is aware of student progress and is involved in any interventions to support student success.</p> <p>Current resourcing meets the needs of the business and the functions of teaching and learning. Management has invested in enhancements to its new student management system and academic integrity software. These have supported innovation, provided advanced ways to manage moderation and assessment, and tracked student achievement.</p> <p>Staff are well inducted following a deliberative recruitment process. Professional development is provided, with ongoing support and opportunities to upskill available for all staff. Some staff have begun adult teaching training. However, AEI needs to ensure that all staff complete their adult teaching qualification.</p> <p>Christchurch campus staff are well connected to Auckland campus staff and management through a robust chain of</p> |

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| | <p>communication across the whole organisation. Staff are highly valued, and this is reciprocated to management. Staff have the opportunity to contribute to the business and programme management.</p> <p>AEI is organically reflective in practice, with effective self-assessment driving the direction of the business. Data is reviewed quarterly to monitor how performance is contributing to the key indicators of the strategic plan.</p> <p>Potential areas to strengthen in the area of self-assessment include formalising staff appraisals and strengthening relationships with employers and the function of the industry advisory board.</p> |
| Conclusion: | Governance and management are innovative and responsive to change, which supports educational achievement. Self-assessment practice is effective in anticipating business needs, with some areas needing improvement. |

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Compliance accountabilities are well managed and understood. AEI has effective processes and strong self-assessment practices to identify potential risks.</p> <p>Staff are knowledgeable and competent in managing compliance around the enrolment and ongoing support of international students, in line with the Code of Practice.</p> <p>AEI operates with clear legal and ethical practices and transparent processes. The PTE adheres to NZQA rules (including NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018) and has an awareness of regulatory and compliance-related processes.</p> <p>Record-keeping is clear and compliant. Various memorandums of understanding with schools are appropriately managed with appropriate and compliant processes for students under the age of 18.</p> |
| Conclusion: | Important compliance responsibilities are effectively managed. |

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| | AEI plans well to ensure that compliance requirements are met. |
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Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Diploma in Business Management (Level 7)

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Good |

2.2 Focus area: English for Academic and General Purposes (Level 4) (Training Scheme)

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Good |

2.3 Focus area: International Student Support and Wellbeing

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |

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.

NZQA recommends that Alpha Educational Institute:

- Strengthen relationships with industry to formalise an industry advisory board representative of employers and other stakeholders.

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.

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

Appendix

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 fraud⁵*
- *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.*

⁵ 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.

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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