External Evaluation and Review Report

Auckland Institute of Studies Limited

Date of report: 7 September 2023

About Auckland Institute of Studies Limited

Auckland Institute of Studies (AIS) delivers a range of programmes from level 2 to level 9, both onshore and offshore. The programmes offered include business, tourism management, healthcare, hospitality management and information technology. Students are mainly from non-English speaking backgrounds, and their progression is supported by the organisation's English Language Centre.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	28a Linwood Avenue, Mt Albert¸ Auckland
Eligible to enrol intl students:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic 27 (13 per cent)
	International 188 (87 per cent – 16 per cent online-offshore)
	Total: 215 (at 30 November 2022)
	Domestic: Tongan 3 per cent, Chinese 3 per cent, Korean 2 per cent, Samoan 1 per cent, NZ Māori 0.5 per cent, Other 2.5 per cent.
	International: China 25 per cent, Philippines 13 per cent, India 12 per cent, Tonga 8 per cent, Korea 4 per cent, Vietnam 4 per cent, Russia 3 per cent, Thailand 3 per cent, Brazil 2 per cent, Fiji 2 per cent, Sri Lanka 2 per cent, Japan 1 per cent, Chile 1 per cent, Colombia 1 per cent, Indonesia 1 per cent, Kazakhstan 1 per cent, Nepal 1 per cent, Other 4 per cent
	Gender: male 44 per cent, female 56 per cent
Number of staff:	Full-time 44; part-time 36 (incl contractors); total 80 (full-time equivalent: 61.8)
TEO profile:	See Auckland Institute of Studies
Last EER outcome:	The previous EER was held in November 2018 and the results were: Highly Confident in

educational performance and Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment.

| Scope of evaluation: | International Student Support and Wellbeing New Zealand Certificate in English Language Level 4 (Academic) ID:124429, Ref: 1883-2; and New Zealand Certificate in English Language (Academic) (Level 5) (NZCEL) ID:124430, Ref: 1884-2 Information Technology Programmes Master of Information Technology (Level 9) ID:125366, Ref: 4086-4 Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology (Level 8) ID:122491, Ref: 3752-2 Graduate Diploma in Information Technology (Level 7) ID:107247, Ref: PC3638-15s Bachelor of Information Technology ID:111829, Ref: PC4007-9 New Zealand Certificate in Information Technology (Level 5) 126448, Ref: 2595-2 New Zealand Diploma in Information Technology Technical Support (Level 5) 126758, Ref: 2596-2 |

MoE number: 8530

NZQA reference: C52290

Dates of EER virtual visit: 9-14 March 2023

Final

Summary of results

AIS has created a purposeful and astute strategic plan which has enabled it to maintain and support high levels of student achievement during the Covid pandemic. Investments that AIS made in quality assurance processes and programme design and delivery have supported staff and students and are leading to improved outcomes.

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

AIS has experienced leadership which is highly capable of guiding the organisation and supporting its vision and strategic goals. The core values of the organisation have been retained; AIS continues to deliver quality educational programmes in a supportive multicultural environment.

Course completion rates have remained consistently high over the four-year period since the last evaluation, and there is parity of achievement for Māori and Pasifika students. Overall, though, international students outperform domestic students. AIS is developing ways of supporting the latter cohort towards achieving equally successful outcomes.

There is strong evidence that AIS has sound self-assessment practice, which is supporting the high levels of student achievement. Improvements in data collection and reporting provides management with a full and representative picture of their staff and students' progress. Upper management has capability in reflective analysis of data, and this is a particular strength.

Graduate outcomes are strong. The programmes are supporting students into either further study or relevant and appropriate entry-level employment. Stakeholder engagement with industry provides useful feedback to programmes.

AIS manages its programme design and delivery well. Attrition of staff, due to the pandemic and falling student numbers, has had some impact. Staff have been stretched at times. AIS is rebuilding staff numbers and is mindful of the need to strengthen their research

capability to preserve the integrity of high-level programmes, in line with NZQA requirements.

Management and staff have a sound understanding of compliance accountabilities and external agency requirements, and these are managed well.

AIS has maintained strong educational performance during a challenging period. NZQA is highly confident in AIS's authentic and ongoing self-assessment continuing to guide and inform performance. AIS is well positioned to continue to achieve excellent outcomes.

Key evaluation question findings[1]

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Course completions have remained consistently high[2] since the last EER, with parity of performance for Pasifika and Māori students. Qualification achievement has mostly been at a similarly high rate. However, the current rate of qualification achievement sits at 78 per cent, which is below the organisation's target of 85 per cent. This is mostly due to disrupted study attributable to the pandemic. Regardless, these rates of achievement are well above other organisations offering a range of high-level degree and postgraduate programmes.

The very small cohort of domestic students generally do not perform as well as their international peers. AIS is working to address this anomaly and improve performance. The highest success rates of qualification achievement are in the degree and postgraduate programmes.[3] Students studying New Zealand Certificate in English Language (NZCEL) (Level 4 and 5) also generally perform very well. Success rates for the sub-degree programmes have been weaker[4], and represent domestic enrolments. As mentioned above, enrolments in these programmes are small, and, while worthy of improvement, do not negatively impact the overall picture of educational performance. |

---

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

[2] See Table 1, Appendix 1.

[3] Master of Information Technology (Trimester 2, 2022 = 100 per cent qualification completion) and Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology (Trimester 2, 2022 = 75 per cent qualification completion).

[4] New Zealand Certificate in Health and Wellbeing (Level 3) (Trimester 2, 2022 = 14.29 per cent qualification completion)

Final

	No learners with a lived experience of disability were self-identified. However, AIS has strong processes in place to track and report on any such students during and after enrolment.
	A highly positive feature of AIS is its capability in gathering and reporting data. This is an improvement since the last EER. Performance data is tracked by programme and ethnicity, and reported through programme committees, the board of studies and the academic board. Comparisons across programmes and demographics are analysed longitudinally to inform decision-making. The board of studies monitors for exceptional performance and under-achievement. The board quality-assures the validity of its data through self-assessment and cross-checking.
	Strong graduate outcomes, as discussed in 1.2, gives confidence in the credibility of the skills gained in the programmes.
	Favourable attendance, low withdrawals and high student satisfaction rates all indicate that students are receiving a valued learning experience.
Conclusion:	Student achievement at AIS is high. The system of supporting students to progress well through programmes is highly effective. Generally, a strong system of self-assessment enables staff to understand rates of achievement and to drive improvements.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Graduate outcomes have remained consistently strong over 2018-21, at around 70-82 per cent. Most graduates, including those who do not have English as their first language, are gaining relevant employment or are accessing and being successful in higher-level programmes.
	AIS tracks its graduates over time and reports programme graduate outcomes one year after graduation to the academic board. Aggregated and disaggregated data, including from graduate surveys, indicates strong performance outcomes. Most

Final

	graduates of the (postgraduate) information technology (ICT) programmes are working in skilled, degree-level jobs, with a few continuing on to further high-level programmes. This is convincing evidence of graduates achieving successful outcomes. The NZCEL graduates generally transition to higher-level programmes within AIS, and there is evidence that these graduates outperform their peers. A feature of AIS is the range of pathway opportunities for graduates, both vocational and academic. There is strong evidence that this range enables students to gain and improve the desired skills and attributes required for employment or more advanced study.
	Stakeholder engagement is primarily through industry and programme advisory feedback. Both focus areas programmes are active in seeking and responding to stakeholder feedback. Recent changes to some programmes required industry consultation, and there is good evidence that a range of stakeholders contributed to changes in programme and assessment design.
	Several programmes offer an internship or project work option, which gives students the opportunity to gain confidence and adaptability in different work settings. Both graduate and employer surveys indicated that the skills and knowledge gained by students are at a high level of capability, and that the strong professional skills they acquire ensured work-ready staff.
	AIS has a number of professional affiliations, including English New Zealand, and during the EER there was sound evidence presented that these connections added robust discussion to quality assurance processes.
Conclusion:	AIS has provided evidence of strong outcomes through improved reporting processes. There is also convincing evidence that stakeholders contribute to and strengthen programme design and delivery.

Final

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

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Industry consultation, input from NZQA, and programme review findings have led to a significant number of programme changes to better respond to and meet the needs of industry and students. AIS used experienced industry experts alongside key staff to make relevant and appropriate programme design and content changes. Programme alignment has therefore improved and a solid self-assessment process and review of the newer programmes have led to changes in offerings. This responsiveness to the initial teething problems in some newer programmes provides good evidence of an effective system of analysis and reporting.
	Programmes are regularly reviewed to inform the PTE's boards of educational performance and to guide decision-making. This process of review allows management to reflect on and analyse teaching and assessment practice. Degree programmes present an APER[5] to NZQA. Most degree programmes, except for the PGDIT and MIT[6], are self-monitoring and undergo monitoring visits annually. Ongoing internal and external moderation informs improvements.
	AIS invested considerably in improving assessment practice following some variable performance in NZQA monitoring and moderation activities across programmes.[7] There has been solid improvement in the validation of assessor decisions, for example in the NZCEL programme. This suggests that assessment practice is fair, valid and consistent for these students. NZQA's agreement with assessor decisions in the Postgraduate Certificate in Business Administration (PGCBA) has also improved. Changes made to moderation practice for ICT

[5] Annual Programme Evaluation Report

[6] Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology and Master of Information Technology

[7] Master of Business Administration, Bachelor of Business and Bachelor of Hospitality Management

Final

	programmes are more recent, therefore the effectiveness of this self-assessment is not fully evident. An ongoing focus on assessment and moderation across the organisation will support quality as AIS rebuilds.
	The drop in student numbers during the pandemic resulted in a reduction in staff numbers. AIS has retained many key staff, in addition to contracting teachers and supervisors. All are well qualified and knowledgeable in their areas of expertise. AIS responded effectively to the change to online delivery, retraining staff and updating resources. Student satisfaction levels with staff are high and improving. Research capability is mostly held within the staff on the research committee and with management, and developing research capability is part of the staff rebuild plan for AIS. This is in line with NZQA programme approval and accreditation requirements, and NZQA monitoring recommendations.
Conclusion:	AIS has made significant changes to its programme portfolio, and has used a solid system of review to evaluate the effectiveness of its performance in meeting stakeholder needs. Some variability in moderation and assessment practice impacts this key evaluation question, as does capability in research practice, attributable mostly to changes outside the PTE's control, i.e. the pandemic. Continued focus on rebuilding and developing staff, when possible, will support performance in assessment practice and relevant research capability.

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

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	An effective pre-enrolment and orientation process enables students and staff to make sound decisions on programme selection. Induction is comprehensive and informative for students to understand enrolment expectations, for example attendance and academic validity requirements. Student needs are assessed, and the relevant staff informed. The campus is

well designed to accommodate students who may have special needs, for example additional physical support.

The capability to deliver programmes online, both onshore and offshore, has reduced barriers to access for many students. There is good evidence that this supports favourable learning outcomes.[8] There were some initial challenges in managing programme timetables. High withdrawal rates in some sub-degree level programmes also reflect a range of personal and external factors for domestic students, particularly pandemic impacts. AIS could strengthen its self-assessment in this area to better understand student preferences for programme delivery.

The variability in retention rates for Māori and Pasifika students in some programmes warrants further analysis to show that the good support they are currently receiving is effective. Māori enrolment rates are low and reducing in numbers.[9] AIS has recently developed a Māori strategy in consultation with Ngāti Whatua Orakei, subsequently adding a new course to the business suite, 'Culture and Business in Aotearoa New Zealand'. Some staff indicated they would welcome further professional development in the teaching and learning practices that support performance for these groups.

Sound and effective student support services offer a range of academic and pastoral resources. The Learner Hub offers students a supportive learning environment in an increasingly well-resourced centre. Good uptake of these services suggests their perceived high value to students.

At-risk students are identified through an effective system of reporting and intervention. Reporting on student satisfaction levels and weak performance goes to the board of studies and is a catalyst for change. Responses to student concerns are posted on walls or the student learning management system. Overall, there is a robust system for capturing the student voice, including those who are resident students, through regular evaluations, representative attendance at board meetings, and student forums. Student satisfaction levels are high and

---

[8] The PGCBA allows offshore students to undertake initial study in their home country before transitioning to the Master of Business Administration onshore.

[9] This is consistent with AIS's strategic focus on international education; various external factors are likely to also have contributed to declining numbers during the period.

Final

	improving, and AIS can evidence high and fully representative response rates to evaluations across all programmes.
Conclusion:	AIS has sound systems in place to capture the student voice and is responsive to their feedback. There has been significant investment in developing student support services, and students are increasingly able to access up-to-date resources and learning support.
	There is some variability in educational performance, evidenced by higher withdrawal rates, which sits disproportionally with domestic students. This suggests that there is still some strengthening required of self-assessment in this area.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Strong and long-standing leadership has ensured the continuity of the vision, mission and goals of AIS. Staff evaluations confirm that there is an increase in staff satisfaction with the PTE's guidance, leadership, goal-setting and strategic management.
	The impact of Covid-19 led to governance and management making critical decisions to protect and ensure the continuity of the PTE. This included:
	• a reduction and restructure in staffing
	• extensive programme review to improve and better align programmes to match stakeholder needs
	• a significant investment in IT capability to enable flexible delivery options and to modernise student support resourcing.
	Managing the delivery of the wide range of programmes during the pandemic proved challenging for AIS. It required workforce reduction and increased workloads for staff. Some quality management issues which emerged in relation to online assessment and sub-degree programmes, were reflected in student performance, and outcomes of monitoring activities. AIS's systematic and effective responses reflect the PTE's overall robust academic framework for quality assurance. AIS

Final

	continued with some research-related initiatives which are a sound basis for rebuilding research capability as a matter of priority.[10]

Capability in self-assessment and analysis has improved since the last EER. A full and representative dataset gives governance and management a clear view of performance and areas that may need further support. A business plan with clear key performance indicators is a sub-set of the strategic plan. The executive team meets fortnightly to oversee and benchmark performance across programmes. Layers of data validation from programme level up to management provide assurance of reliable data.

The ability of AIS to be nimble to changes brought about by adverse circumstances has led to some useful reflections and improvements made by management. One example is the reduction in campus size to one site, which clarified the importance of communication, made straightforward by proximity. Management has now initiated a number of changes in communication strategies, to ensure that these benefits are retained with growth. |
| Conclusion: | AIS has been highly effective in managing educational performance in a context of significant disruption for staff and students. Several programme delivery-related issues which emerged early in the period have been largely mitigated and/or addressed. AIS shows considerable decision-making ability in strategising and assessing its own performance as a management team. This has contributed to continued strong outcomes for students, and the continuation of the PTE. |

---

[10] The impact of the pandemic on research in the wider tertiary sector is reflected in the postponement of the next PBRF round.

Final

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	AIS has clear and effective policies and processes to support the management of its compliance accountabilities.
	A quality framework is managed and reviewed monthly. To ensure there is sufficient depth of coverage, AIS also reviews specific focus areas of the policies and procedure manual over a four-year cycle.
	NZQA attestations, annual programme evaluation reports and self-review documents are submitted within the required timeframe. Credit reporting of unit standard results meets requirements.
	Moderation history has been variable, with some issues around the quality of assessments in the Master of Business Administration, Bachelor of Business and Bachelor of Hospitality Management. AIS has invested well in developing staff capability and improving assessment processes. In general, the quality of AIS's assessor decisions and assessment materials in the programmes monitored has improved.
	AIS is a signatory to the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021. The PTE's self-review of the Code was submitted to NZQA in a timely manner and demonstrates sound processes to ensure compliance. Capability in reflective analysis of performance against the outcomes is also noteworthy. The NZQA monitoring visit to AIS's student accommodation in 2022 found no issues and the EER team heard of effective systems in place to maintain the health and safety of residents.
	Some concerns were raised by the Tertiary Education Commission on recent variability in meeting funding obligations, and financial viability due to Covid-19-based issues. These issues are being managed well within projected budgets.
	Improving the quality of programme approval and changes to programmes (a recommendation from the last EER) has been

	well met, with the success rate of applications steadily improving.
	A review of student files by the NZQA team showed sound processes for documenting student information, and no issues were noted.
Conclusion:	AIS has sound and effective processes to ensure that important compliance accountabilities are well managed. Staff are well informed of their roles and responsibilities.

Final

Focus areas

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

2.1 International Students: Support and Wellbeing

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	The experience that AIS has in delivering international education is clearly shown in their well-executed system of policies and procedures which underpins ongoing high rates of international students' success. There is a robust academic and pastoral care system overseen by competent and well-informed staff. There has been some variability in performance – in particular, the move to delivering online-offshore programmes caused a few issues with managing time zones effectively. These issues were quickly rectified. AIS is responsive to feedback and effective at resolving issues. Some variability in the performance of the small number of Pasifika international students warrants ongoing focus.

2.2 New Zealand Certificate in English Language (Level 4 and Level 5)

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	The English Language Centre at AIS is providing students with relevant, skills-based programmes which support the acquisition of language and required concepts for further tertiary study. There is parity of performance across cohorts, including domestic and international Pasifika students. A highly reflective system of review and analysis supports all students.

2.3 Information Technology Programmes

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Most students in the ICT programmes are gaining qualifications, and there is sound and substantive evidence that many are progressing to appropriate entry-level, relevant employment. There is some variability in performance, particularly with the

	sub-degree programmes, and in moderation and monitoring results, which impacts on the rating of this focus area.

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 Auckland Institute of Studies Limited:

- Rebuild capability in academic oversight across programmes, with leaders in each programme area holding industry-relevant knowledge.

- Continue to build on improving programme accessibility for all students.

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

Table 1. Qualification completion and retention*

Year	Total expected to complete	Completed on time	Completed with extension	Currently enrolled	Withdrawn/ unaccounted	Total completed	Completion rate	Retention rate
2019	742	627	59	0	56	686	92.45%	51.30%
2020	701	566	67	0	68	633	90.30%	49.63%
2021	537	402	41	5	89	443	82.50%	34.07%
2022	338	236	29	9	64	265	78.40%	37.25%

Table 2. Course completion and success rate

Year	Course enrolments	Completed	Pass	Fail	Did not complete	Completion rate	Success rate #1	Success rate #2
2019	9321	9204	8760	444	117	98.74%	95.18%	93.98%
2020	5182	5056	4869	187	126	97.57%	96.30%	93.96%
2021	3206	2965	2815	150	241	92.48%	94.94%	87.80%
2022	1462	1387	1320	67	75	94.87%	95.17%	90.29%

*TEO-supplied data

The qualification retention rate measures students who completed with an extension, plus those who are currently enrolled, as a percentage of students who did not complete on time.

#1. Course success rate #1 measures successful course completions as a percentage of total course completions.

#2. Course success rate #2 measures successful course completions as a percentage of total course enrolments

Final

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[11]*

- *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.*

---

[11] 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 2021, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

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 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

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 2021. 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/.

Final

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz

Final