

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Languages International Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 26 June 2013

# Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction .....	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review .....	5
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results .....	6
Findings .....	8
Recommendations .....	15
Appendix .....	16

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# 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:	Languages International Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	27 Princes Street, Auckland
Delivery sites:	23, 27, 29 and 31 Princes Street, Auckland and 69 Worcester Boulevard, Christchurch.
First registered:	1 April 1991
Courses currently delivered:	<p>General English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English for University and Pathways (EUP)</li><li>• English for Business</li><li>• Cambridge and IELTS exam preparation</li><li>• TOEFL and TOEIC test preparation</li></ul> <p>Teacher Training including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults</li><li>• Cambridge Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults</li></ul> <p>TESOL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cambridge Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)</li></ul> <p>Workplace literacy programme</p>

Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students signatory?:	Yes – students aged 14-17 years and 18 years and up
Number of students:	Domestic: Languages International has funding for 39 learners for 40 hours each  International: 230
Number of staff:	30 full-time equivalents
Distinctive characteristics:	Languages International is a school that is focused on teaching English. The school also offers programmes that support native-speaking and non-native speakers to teach English to speakers of other languages. More recently, Languages International has been running workplace literacy programmes.  The organisation is a member of English New Zealand and the International Association of Language Centres.
Recent significant changes:	The Christchurch campus had to be evacuated after the February 2011 earthquake as it was initially situated within a 'no access zone' for a limited period following the February earthquake, before access was reinstated. The Christchurch campus has had to move twice, in 2011 and again in 2012, due to zoning and demolition of neighbouring buildings, but is now back in the original premises'
Previous quality assurance history:	At the previous NZQA quality assurance visit, an audit in 2009, Languages International met all but one requirement of the standard then in place. This minor issue was remedied shortly after the visit.  The English New Zealand audit, from November 2011, found that Languages International met all standards and the audit resulted in no recommendations.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The external evaluation and review examined the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support for international students

The other focus areas were chosen as they represented a range of programmes delivered by Languages International.

- General English
- English for University
- Workplace Literacy

The General English programme is the largest programme offered by the organisation while English for University is a discreet programme with a clear academic pathway. The Workplace Literacy programme is distinct in that it is the only programme that attracts government funding and it works largely with domestic students in their workplace.

## 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](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction) 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.*

Languages International supplied the evaluation team with a self-assessment summary supplemented with a wide range of documents that were cross-referenced to the tertiary evaluation indicators. Two evaluators visited the Auckland campus of Languages International over two and a half-days. While on site, the evaluation team interviewed the chief executive, senior managers, the director of studies, tutors, students, student support staff and the administration manager. The evaluation team also interviewed the director of studies, the tutors and some students from the Christchurch campus via Skype. External stakeholders, including workplace literacy students and managers were interviewed via phone. The evaluation team also viewed a range of documents including surveys of students, staff, internal and external reports, meeting minutes, achievement results and planning documents.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Languages International Limited**.

There is a consistent theme of maintaining high quality that runs through the planning and review documentation and strong educational performance at Languages International. The evaluation team saw a range of evidence that this goal was being met. Teaching is a strength, with well qualified staff who regularly reflect and continuously develop their practice. The students' needs are well understood and their learning is guided in class and independently through their scheduled hours in the well-resourced learning centre. Learners spoken to by the evaluation team are confident they are progressing well with their English language skills and this corroborated evidence cited by the evaluation team that showed a careful tracking of individual's skills and abilities, matched to their goals for learning.

A key indicator of quality is the fact that 97.3 percent of leavers from Auckland and 100 percent of learners from Christchurch said that they would recommend the school to others. Furthermore, the i-graduate survey, an external survey of nearly 1500 international students across 52 English language providers, shows that the school compares well with the New Zealand average for recommendation ratings. This and the results of other mechanisms to canvas students' satisfaction with teaching and support services demonstrate a very high satisfaction rate with the school.

Learner evaluations indicate students studying the English for University course are confident they are learning useful skills to prepare them for further study. This includes referencing, paraphrasing, lectures, research and written and oral presentation skills. The workplace literacy programme is also getting excellent results with learners and managers, across a number of workplaces, giving feedback to Languages International that the course has improved the ability of people to do their work effectively.

Overall, Languages International has excellent processes and practices in place to ensure the programmes and services they deliver are high quality and that this results in excellent achievement and outcomes that are valued by learners and other stakeholders. The findings of this review concur with an earlier 2011 English New Zealand review that concluded 'Languages International Auckland is a very well run school. The academic leadership... is of a very high standard and is well appreciated by the teaching staff and the students'.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Languages International Limited**.

Languages International is an organisation that understands how well it is performing. This is through a wide range of mechanisms that reflect on all aspects of its work. Examples include externally commissioned research with key stakeholders, including students and agents, and participation in the Ministry of Education commissioned research i-graduate *International Insight* undertaken in 2012. Membership of English New Zealand requires regular reviews. There is good evidence that the findings from research and reviews are used to inform planning and improvements. An example of this includes research that pointed to a lower satisfaction rate with one group of international students. A change in teaching and support strategies with this group has resulted in improved satisfaction rates.

Continuous monitoring of feedback on the different aspects of students' experience means that Languages International has a good understanding of these key aspects and is able to pick up issues in a timely way. Formal feedback is compared between courses and analysed over terms and across years. Students are given multiple formal and informal channels for feedback, and the evaluation team saw that students took these opportunities to raise issues. Any issues are quickly responded to and the evaluation team heard and read examples of changes being made, for example to students' learning plans and accommodation.

The tracking of English for University graduates is a useful initiative that is already providing some useful data and holds the promise to further determine the value of that programme to those progressing to further study. The workplace literacy programmes are developed with a clear self-assessment framework, and reports back to workplaces demonstrate a commitment to seeking feedback and improving the course to better match stakeholder needs.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners 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**.

The evaluation team concluded that there is excellent achievement at Languages International based on a range of indicators seen and heard during the evaluation visit. For example, the team saw examples of learners progress reports that tracked their achievements over time across the different skills levels and demonstrated that good progress was being made. IELTS results shown to the evaluation team demonstrated that some learners made significant shifts in their exam scores, enabling some to meet their goal of tertiary study. In the EUP course students' self-assessment of their learning showed all were extremely positive about what they had achieved through the course. In the workplace literacy programme individual learning plans track learners' progress and initial and summative scores in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool (ALNAT) show significant learner gain.

Achievement in English language and literacy is assessed against established frameworks of reference and there are robust criteria and moderation processes that give credibility to results. An exercise to convince the university about the robustness of the EUP programme matched the levels of achievement within that programme with learners' IELTS results. The results showed Languages International had given no false positives and thereby gave confidence in the achievements of the EUP Higher graduates to enable them to successfully undertake degree level study in New Zealand.

These achievements, demonstrated in the paperwork, were corroborated by the students spoken to by the evaluators who were very positive about the progress they had made with their English language and/or literacy skills. Learners made a strong connection between what they were achieving and good teaching. A final indicator of excellent achievement are the i-grad 2012 English Language Barometer (ELB) survey results which showed Languages International had an average rating of 94.2 percent for satisfaction with learning. This is well above international and New Zealand averages of 85.4 and 86.1 percent respectively.

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



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

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

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

Languages International is very clear about the indicators monitored for ensuring that learners and other stakeholders are gaining valued outcomes. These include the satisfaction of students and the numbers who would recommend the organisation to others, the satisfaction of agents who work with the school, and the extent of market share that the school has in the sector. The evaluation team accepts that if key stakeholders weren't getting valued outcomes this would be reflected through these indicators.

In fact, against these indicators Languages International perform very strongly. For example, as noted above, the i-graduate ELB survey shows that in 2012, at 91.3 percent, Languages International benchmarks well above global and New Zealand averages of 80.4 and 79.9 percent for those students who would recommend the school. A survey of agents, commissioned in 2010, reported that 85 percent would have no reservations recommending the school. Agents rated Languages International between 4 and 5 on a five point scale, with the standard and quality of teachers, academic standards, range of courses and facilities rating particularly highly. Market share is looked at regularly and included in Board reports and demonstrates that Languages International has performed well and maintained a strong position over a number of years.

In the workplace literacy programme there is good evidence that learners are increasing the literacy levels and this is having a positive impact, not only on their roles and work but also on their private lives. Employers noted that those who had been through the programme were working more professionally and communication processes had improved. These outcomes are excellent.

Tracking students who graduate from the EUP course has just begun and this demonstrates that some are successful in gaining places in degree programmes. The organisation plans to track the first-year university success rates of these students and this will provide further useful information about the value of the EUP to their study.

Languages International contributes to development of the wider English language sector in New Zealand. For example, the current chief executive holds the chairman position with English New Zealand and a number of the teaching staff work as English New Zealand auditors and/or Cambridge CELTA assessors. Staff from the school have also regularly presented at industry conferences and several staff members have published ELT course books. This activity not only contributes to the wider sector but is in turn useful in informing the quality standards at Languages International.

### 1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

There are excellent processes in place to understand learners and other stakeholder needs. For example, in the general English programmes, all learners are tested on entry and interviewed to understand their goals and needs. These goals are revisited regularly and the evaluation team saw a number of examples where learners were given academic counselling steering them to particular courses of study that better matched their needs.

The learning centre is a key component of the teaching and learning at Languages International and its use is an integrated part of the students' programme. There are extensive resources available to students in the centre and tutors support learners by suggesting appropriate self-study. Tutors are rostered on and available in the centre and this allows many students important one-to-one teaching time. The learning centre matches learner needs by enabling them to self-direct their study, and extend their knowledge and skills while being guided by tutor support. The feedback from learners indicates that they value this service highly.

For the Workplace Literacy programme there is a thorough needs analysis undertaken before the programme is designed. Staff members are shadowed through their roles and interviews are held with staff and their managers. External stakeholders noted the high value of having a programme tailor-made to their context.

There are good processes for reviewing programmes and activities and examples include triennial English New Zealand audits, supplemented by annual self-reviews against the standard, and a recent internal review of the course and assessments for the English for University Higher course to ensure they better meet the needs of learners moving to tertiary study in New Zealand. Another example is an ongoing update of the skills lessons, in response to tutors identifying that some needed refreshing. Further improvements are being made with the introduction of technology-enabled classrooms and a staged process of IT champions supporting teachers to become familiar with integrating the technology with their teaching.

## 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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**.

Systematically collected feedback, both internally and externally, indicates that high quality teaching is a key feature of Languages International. For learning overall and key aspects of the learning experience including performance feedback, course organisation and content, language practice, virtual learning and teachers' English the organisation scored significantly higher than the New Zealand average on the i-grad 2012 ELB survey. Internal surveys show teaching in Auckland and Christchurch scored 4.66 and 4.77 respectively on a five-point scale. This has been steadily increasing from 4.54 and 4.35 since 2008. Students rated performance feedback particularly highly and the evaluation team heard from the different groups of learners on site that they were given valuable feedback that enabled them to understand what skills to target both in class and in their independent study time.

The organisation has a strong focus on staff professional development and ensuring that tutors remain current and engaged in practice. Given that most teachers at Languages International are very experienced and well-qualified, a project-based approach to professional development was implemented in 2012 to allow tutors to pursue aspects of interest relevant to their work. All teachers are contractually obliged to participate in professional development and supported through a scheduled paid hour per week and regular catch-ups with their coaches who review goals and progress. Surveys are just one way teaching quality is monitored. Other processes include tutor feedback, peer observations, and cross-marking of assessments. Teachers are also observed by CELTA trainees. The evaluation team saw and heard good examples of how these reflective processes are useful.

The assessment processes are robust. Teachers have a shared understanding of achievement levels, based on the Common European Framework of Reference. Cross-marking and standardisation workshops ensure that these levels are consistently applied across the classes and campuses. The generally close correlation between the IELTS and EUP results and predictions and actual results in the Cambridge courses affirms this consistency in application.

## 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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**.

Languages International has a range of mechanisms to ensure that learners are guided and supported to achieve. The enrolment and orientation process is useful, with learners having the opportunity to discuss issues and self-assess their skill levels in their first language if necessary. Students are then surveyed after one week to check their progress and also, for longer-stay students there is a midway interview. They can also speak with first language advisers if they need to. Issues are promptly responded to. The learning centre is open and staffed by tutors during school opening hours so there is always someone available if students need study information and advice. It was clear that students related with their teachers and felt they could raise issues if necessary.

In the support category of the i-grad ELB survey Languages International rates 89.7 percent against a New Zealand average of 81.7 percent. Languages International rated significantly higher in 8 out of 10 aspects including pre-arrival advice, social organisation, further study advice and further career advice.

While most students appear very happy with their homestay accommodation it does appear that some students are unhappy with the hostel accommodation. Through regular surveying, Languages International is aware of this issue and has liaised with the hostel concerned and found an alternate, albeit slightly more expensive option. Homestay accommodation is well-managed and the vast majority of surveys attest to a high level of satisfaction with their families.

## 1.6 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**.

The organisation-wide goals for Languages International are clear and consistently applied across the campuses and programmes on offer. There is good evidence of planning and review and the organisation was easily able to demonstrate how these plans are revisited and new initiatives reviewed for effectiveness. Planning is informed by a good understanding of student and wider stakeholder satisfaction and a broad understanding of the wider market. Where necessary, management has commissioned independent research to check their thinking. An indication that staff members feel valued at Languages International is the length of time that many staff have stayed, with a large number having been with the organisation for more than 10 years. Staff reported that there is an open consultative style of

management with a range of people they feel they could go to talk with if they had any concerns. Teachers are offered opportunities for broaden their experience and supported to improve in their roles and many staff reported that they had received financial support to study.

Governance is undertaken by an advisory panel, which has replaced a board that includes the two directors and an external appointment to ensure an independent perspective. In addition, up until relatively recently the board has commissioned external audits of planning processes and systems. Regular full financial audits and key managers reports all feed into the information that is reviewed by the director and independent advisor. In addition, English New Zealand reviews Languages International every three years, and annual self-reviews against these quality standards are part of a number of ongoing mechanisms for monitoring and review. Suggestions from the previous review have been responded to, along with other improvements implemented following reviews.

It is clear that the organisation is able to manage change, with the most dramatic example being the Christchurch earthquake and the impact that event had on the school. As part of a renovation project in 2006 Languages International building was earthquake strengthened. Following the September 2010 earthquake, the school put together an emergency plan that included using the Auckland office as a resource should another large earthquake strike. During the February earthquake this plan was implemented and communications through Auckland ensured agents and families were able to be quickly informed about students' safety. While their building withstood the earthquake the school was in the no-access zone and this resulted in an immediate evacuation. In the aftermath the Christchurch campus has had to move twice and downsize dramatically. It is a testimony to the continuing standard of quality that in 2012, despite the campus disruptions, 100 percent of the Christchurch students said on their leaving questionnaire that they would recommend the school.

## Focus Areas

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

### 2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

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

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

### 2.2 Focus area: Workplace Literacy

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

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

### 2.3 Focus area: General 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**.

### 2.4 Focus area: English for University

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

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

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Languages International continue to liaise with tertiary organisations to monitor the outcomes of the English for University graduates who pathway to their programmes.

# Appendix

## Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of programme approval and accreditation (under sections 249 and 250 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Programmes established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act and published in the Gazette of 28 July 2011 at page 3207. These policies and criteria are deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under the new section 253.*

*In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual programmes they own or provide. These criteria and policies are also deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under section 253. Section 233B(1) of the Act requires registered PTEs to comply with these rules.*

*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 EER process approved by the NZQA Board.*

*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)).*

*Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/NZQA>.*

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