



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report



Soshi Gakuen New Zealand
Incorporated trading as IPU New
Zealand (Institute of the Pacific
United New Zealand)

Date of report: 29 July 2025

About Soshi Gakuen New Zealand Incorporated

IPU New Zealand is a not-for-profit organisation which is part of an international network of tertiary education organisations. IPU offers interdisciplinary, degree-level programmes teaching communication and research skills and critical thinking, to prepare graduates to work in an international environment. IPU also delivers English and Japanese language programmes to students from a range of nationalities.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	57 Aokautere Drive, Fitzherbert, Palmerston North
Eligible to enrol international students:	Yes
Number of students in 2023:	International: 198 (89 per cent) Domestic: 27 (11 per cent) 217 equivalent full-time students Japanese 22 per cent, Japanese (short duration) 25 per cent, Filipino 16 per cent, Indian 10 per cent, Māori-Pasifika 2 per cent, Disabled 2 per cent
Number of staff:	50 full-time equivalents
TEO profile:	IPU details on NZQA website IPU enrolls mostly international students. The Covid-19 pandemic brought health concerns, lockdowns and restricted border crossings. IPU therefore faced unprecedented pastoral, educational and financial challenges.
Last EER outcome:	Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment (June 2019). Highly Confident/Highly Confident (2015). Highly Confident/Confident (2011)
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">103152 Master of Contemporary International Studies (Level 9)

- 125444 English Language Studies (Academic) (Level 3), and 120442 English Language Studies (Academic) (Level 4)
- International Student Support and Wellbeing

MoE number: 8550

NZQA reference: C53098

Dates of EER visit: 14-17 May 2024

Summary of results

IPU has met many of the important needs of its students and stakeholders during an unprecedented and difficult operating period. IPU is rebuilding and progressively strengthening areas requiring attention.

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- IPU has an extended track record of high performance over the period 2009-19. However, since 2019 IPU has negotiated an unprecedented and difficult operating period arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Despite major disruptions, students have successfully completed papers at rates similar to the previous EER period (73-83 per cent). Most alumni in a survey found their learning experience and what they studied to be extremely valuable in preparing them for their careers and life after study. Many settled in New Zealand, working in diverse settings. The quality of the post-study information was sufficient.
- IPU provides a pathway from its English programmes to its degree programmes. IPU offers students a valuable cross-cultural immersion experience in a New Zealand tertiary education environment. Students develop capabilities for working in a global environment. Pastoral support has been effective, supporting students to complete their studies.
- The Soshi Gakuen group provided substantial funding support for IPU during the Covid pandemic. However, while national borders were closed, IPU's operating environment was inevitably constrained. Some roles remained unfilled, and gaps in academic oversight, self-assessment, quality assurance, pastoral support and compliance management, arose.
- IPU has been rebuilding and strengthening its capability and processes since the end of 2023. There has been measurable progress. The overarching direction forward is coherent and considered. This report identifies some key

areas that require attention such as the paused master's programme review. IPU is addressing many of these issues.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Most IPU students are international students who enrol in the suite of degree-level programmes in contemporary international studies or in the English programmes. Despite significant operating challenges, IPU student completions have remained mostly strong.² The overall paper completion rate was 73-83 per cent for the 2019-23 period and mostly trending upwards. Nearly all Master's papers were completed, and programme completion rates were close to 100 per cent. These are similar results to the previous EER period. Completion rates for the academic English language papers were sound, above 70 per cent, having improved from 2021 onwards.</p> <p>There were a small number of Māori and Pasifika enrolments (42) over the 2019-23 period. Upon request, IPU identified that 80 per cent of these students have graduated to date. This is a sound rate, although lower than the overall rates.³ The data for students with disabilities is still emerging.</p> <p>Moderation processes are sound, particularly for the English programmes (see focus areas for details). There are processes to verify the authenticity of assessed work. The academic board monitors and confirms all paper completions. These processes provide IPU with a detailed understanding of individual student progress. They give NZQA confidence in the reported results. Benchmarking, more analysis of aggregate (and subgroup) completions and resits (where appropriate) are areas that may provide additional insights.</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.

² See Appendix 1 and Focus Area 2.1 for further details.

³ See Appendix 1, Table 4.

Conclusion:	IPU students have generally achieved strongly. Completions are similar to the previous EER period. IPU has a robust understanding of individual student achievement. However, self-assessment could be strengthened further by the use of benchmarking and disaggregated resit results.
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1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Progressively over the period 2020-24, 73 alumni survey respondents rated their learning experience. Over 75 per cent found their learning experience and what they studied to be extremely valuable in preparing them for their careers and life after studies. However, this strong commendation is tempered as the response rate seems low and the sampling methodology is unclear, including how many survey respondents graduated during the review period (2019-24).</p> <p>IPU also collected data from a well-known professional network on 286 graduates from 2019-24. Seventy per cent reported that they remained in New Zealand, likely using English in their role. They were working in diverse industries and roles, with varying levels of responsibility. There was no programme-level analysis.</p> <p>English language students who enrol on the English programme gain fluency. Three consistency review results verified that English language graduates had demonstrated the expected language fluency and, at level 4, academic skills. Eighteen level 4 graduates progressed to the Bachelor's programme. Anecdotally, these graduates had stronger academic skills than other enrolled students.</p> <p>IPU makes a significant economic and cultural contribution to Palmerston North. The city and its community remain important stakeholders.</p> <p>IPU's research capability was affected by multiple resignations, including the head of quality assurance and</p>

	research. However, senior academic appointments since the end of 2023 are moving IPU in a new direction.
Conclusion:	There is sound evidence of IPU creating relevant and significant outcomes of value for its graduates and key stakeholders. There are also opportunities for improving self-assessment.

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:	<p>IPU provides students with a pathway from its English programmes to the degree programmes. IPU provides its international and domestic students with a cross-cultural immersion learning experience in a New Zealand tertiary education environment. Student and staff are from diverse backgrounds. IPU engages with local business networks, exposing its students to the New Zealand workplace culture.</p> <p>Students value the small class sizes and the interactive learning approach. Surveys (with representative response rates) state that the students find the learning useful, and they understand the content. Alumni survey respondents have showed interest in more internship opportunities which IPU has collated and analysed.</p> <p>IPU reviews and adapts its delivery to the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders. The academic board has applied sound oversight and controls. There are processes to ensure authentic work is submitted. IPU has recently drafted an AI policy.</p> <p>In response to Covid restrictions, IPU developed a hybrid delivery model, where students began studying online and completed on site and so retained the PTE's critical cross-cultural dimension. Multiple changes in personnel limited oversight of some quality assurance activities, including the moderation of degree programmes. Similarly, a major independent review of the Master's programme was undertaken but implementation was paused. NZQA monitoring of the degree programmes was also postponed</p>

	in 2023 due to limited IPU capacity. IPU has, however, developed other programmes and micro-credentials over the evaluation period.
Conclusion:	Programmes match the important needs of students and other relevant stakeholders, while operating sometimes in very challenging circumstances. Many but not all review processes continued. There were some improvements and/or adaptations.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>IPU offers a range of services that support student wellbeing and their academic progress. Lecturers are the first line of support; student feedback was positive about their contribution. A library and librarian also offer academic services. The career centre helps students explore career options and how to search for and gain paid work. Counselling services are available. These services are provided on site and, since 2020, online. Students also access fees scholarships. IPU has a cafeteria and recreational facilities and a range of clubs that students join.</p> <p>A 2022 NZQA review of the accommodation the PTE provides identified no significant concerns. There were multiple illustrations of support provided throughout the Covid-19 lockdown. IPU invested in technology to enable online participation. Recently, in response to student feedback, the college renovated the student common area.</p> <p>The student support manager, the lead pastoral support-focused role, has been vacant since August 2023 (eight months up to the enquiry date) and this has impacted pastoral support oversight and leadership.⁴ The Director General Administration or Director Business Development continued some but not all the student support processes.</p>

⁴ IPU is currently interviewing for this role.

	<p>IPU undertook a NZQA-initiated Code⁵ gap analysis in 2022 that informed the 2023 Code review. However, IPU acknowledged the ensuing action plan has stalled. This is illustrated by the student wellbeing annual plan, and disability and diversity-related policies not being developed. A revised complaints process has been approved but not yet implemented. None of the support staff interviewed had undertaken professional development related to the Code. IPU published its 2023 Code review but not the required complaints and critical incidents information.</p> <p>However, it is notable that over this disrupted period the students still completed their studies at rates similar to those in the previous EER period. The student feedback the EER team sighted and analysed remained positive about the support provided.</p>
Conclusion:	IPU has continued to be effective in supporting students to complete their learning. However, the IPU review of pastoral support has been variable. This gap requires prompt attention.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>IPU governance and management have an extended track record of supporting high performance over the period 2009-19. However, in this most recent period, due to multiple restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, IPU has faced unprecedented operating conditions. IPU predominately enrolls international students and so experienced a major fall in enrolments.</p> <p>The Soshi Gakuen group provided substantial financial support to sustain IPU over this period. Restructuring occurred (April 2022) to better align costs with diminished income streams. While retaining all key units, this understandably reduced the capacity of the leadership and</p>

⁵ [The Education \(Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners\) Code of Practice 2021.](#)

	<p>staffing. Budget constraints were in place. However, IPU did invest in technology to support online/hybrid delivery.</p> <p>The academic board and health and safety committee continued to function. The stakeholder academic advisory board, one mechanism for industry input, had been dormant since 2021. There were some impacts on quality assurance and compliance management.</p> <p>Since late 2023, IPU began rebuilding its leadership, with three experienced managers hired over this period. New sub-committees have and are being established to support effective education management. Some key roles still remain vacant. The overall direction the leadership has taken is coherent and considered.</p> <p>Considered self-assessment has informed much of the decision-making over this turbulent period. This report has identified both continuity and disruption in self-assessment activities. IPU needs to sustain and extend the actions taken to date. The recommendations in this report identify some specific actions for IPU to consider.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>IPU leadership has a track record of supporting high performance. It has negotiated a difficult and unprecedented period, with Soshi Gakuen group underwriting IPU finances. The leadership is rebuilding IPU. The direction being taken is positive and needs to be sustained and extended.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>IPU has roles and processes in place to manage its important compliance accountabilities including those arising from regulatory changes. The key findings are mixed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Tertiary Education Commission audit report (10 May 2024) found programmes had been delivered as approved. It found one of nine focus areas non-compliant due to an instance of double reporting a result. This was viewed as a serious matter, occurring

	<p>during a move to a new student management system. There were some areas for improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant late reporting of unit standard results in 2019 and 2020 were fully resolved in 2022 and 2023. • A sampling of international student files found no gaps. • IPU has engaged with external moderation and monitoring requirements. • IPU has engaged appropriately qualified and experienced lecturers. • IPU has submitted most attestations as required. However, it is late in submitting fit and proper persons declarations for seven management staff, four of whom are resident in Japan. <p>IPU established a part-time role in September 2022 to systematically review (or develop) policies and procedures. Progress has been limited to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current policy handbook was approved in April 2019; policies were due for review in 2021 or 2022. • An initial review has been undertaken of all key policies. • However, just one policy was approved and implemented in the first year, and three more in the following six months. • Other policies are at different stages of development.
Conclusion:	<p>The management and review of key compliance accountabilities has been effective in some, but not all, key areas. There has been some limited progress in revising core compliance-related procedures.</p>

Focus areas

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

2.1 103152 Master of Contemporary International Studies (Level 9)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence: ⁶	<p>Paper and programme completions continued to be high over the evaluation period. Students learned relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes. There is evidence that graduates were satisfied with their learning experience and of progression into work roles, with many settling in New Zealand. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. A blended programme was developed to enable ongoing learning during the restrictions arising from the pandemic. Students are effectively supported to complete their studies. There were no significant compliance gaps relating to this programme.</p> <p>As part of restructuring, the head of school role was disestablished in 2022. For several months, the new role of quality assurance and research was held by different staff members. Eventually, the director academic took over this role, but he too left the organisation. As a result, some processes were not sustained, including the oversight of staff research, and the maintenance of the external stakeholder academic advisory committee. However, since late 2023, leadership positions have been progressively filled.</p> <p>There have been various programme reviews. IPU commissioned external consultants who systematically reviewed this programme in 2021, identifying some areas needing attention though changes were postponed due to the challenging operating conditions. The 2021 and 2022 NZQA monitoring reports found the degree programmes, including the Master's, 'fit for purpose'.</p> <p>There has been insufficient leadership capacity to complete and implement some key reviews and changes as recommended. The revitalised academic management</p>

⁶ NZQA will undertake monitoring of this programme in 2024.

	team has set up new sub-committees, revised research focus and improved moderation administrative processes. This committee should enable implementation completion of recommended changes from the 2021 review.
Conclusion:	The programme has met many of the important needs of the students through a disrupted period. Leadership has now been strengthened and review of programme design can be completed. Some initial improvements have already been undertaken.

2.2 125444 English Language Studies (Academic) (Level 3), and 120442 English Language Studies (Academic) (Level 4)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Paper and programme completions were mostly strong and improved in the later years for level 4 programme. Students learn relevant English language knowledge and skills, and academic study skills at level 4. The positive consistency review results and consistent external moderation results validate students are developing the expected graduate profile outcomes. Students were effectively supported to complete their studies.</p> <p>The head of school role was disestablished in April 2022 and replaced by a programme co-ordinator role established and appointed in December 2023. The director academic manages the transition.</p>
Conclusion:	The programme meets the important needs of its students. The review of educational performance is generally strong. No significant gaps were identified.

2.3 International Student Support and Wellbeing

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	Nearly all IPU NZ students are international students. Therefore, the findings and ratings for this focus area mirror key evaluation question 4: How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning? The ratings are the same.

Conclusion:	IPU has continued to be generally effective in supporting students to complete their learning. However, the review of pastoral support has been variable. This requires attention.
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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.

NZQA recommends that Soshi Gakuen New Zealand Incorporated:

- Consider the benefits of benchmarking, more analysis of aggregate (and subgroup) completions and resits (where appropriate) to inform further review of programmes, support and achievement.
- Prioritise completing the review of the Master of Contemporary International Studies programme⁷ (see key evaluation question 3 and focus area 2.1).
- Implement the recently approved complaints process (see key evaluation question 4).
- Consider the benefits of reintroducing a periodic staff survey to gain clearer data on staff perspectives (see key evaluation question 5).
- Prioritise the updating and developing of key compliance procedures and their implementation (see key evaluation question 6).
- Consider re-establishing the head of global studies school position to provide robust leadership of the degree programmes (see focus area 2.1 Master of Contemporary International Studies (level 9)).

⁷ This review would be informed by the NZQA monitoring due to take place in August 2024.

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 1

Table 1. Average paper completion rate across all NZQA-approved programmes 2019-23 (percentage of total papers)

Year	Completion rate to date (%)
2019	73.6
2020	72.7
2021	83.4
2022	83.3
2023	78.8

Source: IPU data

Table 2. 103152 Master of Contemporary International Studies (Level 9) paper completion rate 2019-23

Year	Completion rate (%)
2019	100
2020	98.7
2021	100
2022	95.5
2023	97.4

Source: IPU data

Table 3. 103152 Master of Contemporary International Studies (Level 9) cohort-based programme completion rate

Year	Total students	Total graduates	Completion rate to date (%)	Still enrolled	Potential completion rate (%) ⁸
2019	24	24	100	0	100
2020	9	9	100	0	100
2021	30	24	80	2	90
2022	37	6	16	22	86
2023	42	0	0	42	100

Source: IPU data

Table 4. English Language Studies (Academic) (Level 3) and (Academic) (Level 4) paper completion rate 2019-23 (percentage of total papers)

Year	Completion rate (%)
2019	41
2020	42
2021	70
2022	72
2023	77

Source: IPU data

⁸ Some students are still completing this two-year programme.

Table 5. 125444 English Language Studies (Academic) (Level 3) programme completion rate 2019-23

Year	Total students	Total graduates	Completion rate to date (%)	Still enrolled	Potential completion rate (%)
2019 ⁹	-	-	-	-	-
2020	7	6	86	0	86
2021	16	14	88	0	88
2022	20	19	95	0	95
2023	21	18	86	3	100

Source: IPU data

Table 6. 120442 English Language Studies (Academic) (Level 4) programme completion rate 2019-23

Year	Total students	Total graduates	Completion rate to date (%)	Still enrolled	Potential completion rate (%)
2019	-	-	-	-	-
2020	19	12	63	0	74
2021	19	16	84	1	89
2022	16	11	69	1	75
2023	18	10	56	4	83

Source: IPU data

⁹ The English Language Studies (Academic) (Level 3) programme was not offered in 2019.

Table 7. Programme completion rate for Māori and Pasifika students 2019-23¹⁰

Year	Total students	Total graduates	Completion rate (%)
2019	17	14	82
2020	15	11	73
2021	–	–	–
2022	–	–	–
2023	–	–	–

Source: IPU data

Table 8. Programme completion rate for students who identified with a disability or learning difficulty 2019-23¹¹

Year	Total students	Total graduates	Completion rate to date (%)	Still enrolled	Potential completion rate (%)
2019-23	45	10	22	24	76

Source: IPU data

¹⁰ The very low 2021-23 enrolment numbers make judgments not meaningful and may identify individual students.

¹¹ NZQA has required tertiary education organisations to track the achievement of students with a disability since September 2022.

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 fraud¹²*
- *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.*

¹² 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 2022, 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 excluding universities, and*
- maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 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, micro-credentials 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 2022. 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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