

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Seafield School of English

Date of report: 3 August 2010

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Brief description of TEO	3
Executive Summary	4
Basis for External Evaluation and Review	6
Findings	7
Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation	7
Part 2: Performance in focus areas	13
Actions Required and Recommendations.....	14

MoE Number: 8552
NZQA Reference: C01556
Date of EER visit: 18 and 19 May 2010

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.

Brief description of TEO

Location: Christchurch

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: 62 students, 13 staff, one programme: English Language Tuition

Sites: As above

Seafield School of English (Seafield) was first registered as a private training establishment with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in 1991, but was originally established as an English language school in the 1980s. Seafield currently offers English language tuition for international students wishing to improve their English language abilities. Tuition is based on the latest version of an internationally recognised English language text, and students are placed in classes according to their level of ability. Seafield also offers students tuition in preparation for Cambridge examinations at the Proficiency, Advanced, and First Certificate levels, as well as preparation for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC).

Seafield enrolls approximately 400 international students per year, with some staying for a few weeks and others for 12 months or longer. On average there are between 70 and 80 students on site at any one time. The school is very well appointed, and has been specifically designed for its current purpose, and includes features such as sound-proofed walls and excellent student and staff facilities. Seafield is based on a philosophy of providing a high level of attention to individual students' learning needs.

The most recent quality assurance visits by NZQA were audits conducted in 2003 and 2006, and Seafield met all of the requirements for ongoing registration at that time.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Seafield School of English**.

Seafield employs highly qualified and experienced English language teachers. The effectiveness of the teaching is well monitored and includes observations by internal and external specialists. The individual students' educational achievements are monitored closely, and appropriate improvements and adjustments are made to their programme and level of study to ensure individual students make good progress. Students' graduate certificates include full details of the level of English language achieved, the length of their stay, and their attendance rate. The graduate certificates include a full explanation of students' command of the English language, as described within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). CEFR provides a benchmark for students, their families, and employers overseas to more fully understand the students' English language abilities.

Seafield reviews the results of Cambridge First Certificate (FCE), Advanced (CAE), and Proficiency (CPE) examinations in order to benchmark the school's performance. These results indicate that the 15 per cent of Seafield students who sit Cambridge examinations are achieving at a similar level to other international students within New Zealand. The majority of students do not sit Cambridge examinations, and their progress is closely monitored at the individual level. Students and staff at Seafield are very satisfied with these students' progress and achievements. However, currently Seafield does not review students' achievements overall, such as by comparing students' achievements year on year, or against any other external comparative data, apart from those that sit Cambridge exams, and is therefore unable to verify how well students are performing overall.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Seafield School of English**.

Seafield is a small organisation, and staff meet weekly to discuss and review individual students' progress. Very detailed individual student records are maintained and used to monitor students' progress and achievements at the individual student level. These records of students' progress move to subsequent teachers and this continuity of information contributes well to teachers' knowledge of individual students' needs, and therefore to students' achievements and rates of progress.

Students' records are currently paper-based and are not collated and analysed at the organisational level, and therefore Seafield is not yet able to analyse its overall performance in terms of student achievement, or to identify organisation-wide patterns or trends in student achievement, except in relation to achievement in Cambridge examinations. The organisation is currently exploring options for computer-based student records.

Seafield has a number of well-established and effective internal review processes. However, these are primarily focused on organisational compliance rather than used to understand how well the organisation is performing overall in meeting students' needs and contributing to students' achievements, or for monitoring patterns or trends over time.

TEO response

Seaford has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Basis for External Evaluation and Review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

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 courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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 policies and criteria 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).

Findings

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

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/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of Seafield School of English included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support including international students.

The following programme focus area includes all student enrolments:

- English Language Tuition.

Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Explanation

Seafield has been operating as an English language school focusing on the international student market for over 20 years, and considers that it has been offering a quality service and meeting the needs of its students. This year Seafield was awarded the Best School Award by the Japanese organisation Ryugaku Journal Inc¹, “in recognition of providing excellence in education”, based on reports from 400 of its students. This award is viewed as a significant achievement by Seafield.

¹ www.ryugakujournal.com

Seafield has a policy of focusing on individual students' needs and individual students' achievements. In this respect the organisation maintains excellent, detailed student records, which follow the student through their time at the school. This has proved a valuable process for teachers, informing them of students' specific levels of performance and abilities within each of the four basic areas in which they are assessed: reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as grammar and vocabulary. Students and staff interviewed at this evaluation confirmed the value of these records. Teaching staff meet weekly to discuss students' individual progress and any emerging issues, which are dealt with professionally and appropriately. Seafield has a clear focus on continually developing and improving students' learning experiences. While staff are able to monitor individual student progress very well, student achievement data is paper-based and is not collated across all classes to enable review of students' achievements overall, or to enable review of this data for emerging patterns or trends. However, Seafield is currently exploring the value of investing in a computer-based system for all organisational records, which will enable it to analyse student achievement data at the organisational level.

When students leave Seafield they are presented with a graduating certificate which includes a range of valuable information such as attendance rate, the English language level achieved, and an explanation of this level as it relates to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) descriptors. This full explanation of their level of ability is valued by students and other stakeholders such as employers.

Approximately 15 per cent of students sit Cambridge examinations at Proficiency, Advanced, and First Certificate levels. Examination results are now being reviewed to compare Seafield students' performance against New Zealand and international results, and they indicate that Seafield's students pass these exams at similar rates.

Students interviewed at this evaluation expressed a high level of satisfaction with their experience at Seafield and were very aware of how well they were progressing in their English language skills. However, while Seafield tracked individual students' progress, it was unable to verify how well students achieve overall across the organisation.

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**.

Explanation

International students enrol with Seafield to improve their English for a very wide range of reasons, ranging from elderly students studying English as their personal reward in their retirement, to Swiss students studying to pass Cambridge Advanced (CAE) or Proficiency (CPE) examinations for teaching English in their home country. Seafield staff are very confident that all students gain something of value while studying at the school. This confidence is based on evidence gained from student surveys and informal and unsolicited feedback from recruitment agents and previous students, all of which is very positive. Cambridge examination results are closely monitored and success rates are approximately 96 per cent.

Student surveys are collected approximately monthly and are reviewed to identify any issues and to monitor students' satisfaction. As with all data at Seafield, student survey information is not collated or analysed overall for emerging patterns or trends. The risk with this approach is that while individual levels of satisfaction are noted and individual issues are well addressed, should levels of satisfaction drop or common issues emerge, these may not be identified. However, neither Seafield nor NZQA has received any serious complaints from students. Seafield has established a Facebook page, primarily for marketing purposes, but is aware that this may facilitate student feedback in the future to further substantiate how well learning outcomes are valued.

Seafield uses an internationally recognised text for its English language tuition, and the learning outcomes from this are well known overseas. As already noted, students' graduation certificates link students' achievement levels to the Common European Framework descriptors.

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**.

Explanation

Seafield has well-established and consistently applied processes to monitor how well its programmes and teaching practices match students' needs. Staff meet weekly to review student achievements and to identify any barriers to their progress. The director of studies reviews teachers' notes in students' files and students are regularly surveyed to check that their needs are met. These checks, combined with the use of an internationally recognised English language text, provide sufficient assurance that students' needs are very well matched and that students' levels of achievement are internationally recognised.

Seafield is frequently asked for reports on the educational achievements and attendance rates for certain students who are studying under scholarships. Staff are able to provide this information to the satisfaction of the requesting organisation.

The evaluation team's observations during the two days of this review were of students studying well in a supportive and collegial atmosphere. Students interviewed confirmed this view that their needs were well met and that they were happy and satisfied and achieving well. Seafield has established free after-school tutorials for students. These are offered on a one-to-one basis every two weeks, and students commented that this provides an excellent venue to get extra help in specific areas where they are struggling.

Seafield maintains membership of English New Zealand (ENZ), the professional association for English language schools in New Zealand, and is audited against the ENZ standard annually. The most recent audit by ENZ was in 2009 and Seafield met all requirements except for the periodic review of student assessments. However, the ENZ report noted that weekly staff meetings are used for this purpose and records are kept of these discussions.

The organisation's evaluative self-assessment of how well its programmes and activities match student needs is strong, because of its strong focus on individual students. Staff keep accurate and

detailed notes for each student, the director of studies maintains an overview of these, and teaching staff as a group review students' progress at weekly staff meetings.

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 **Good**.

Explanation

Seafield employs very well qualified and experienced teachers. All teaching staff are involved in ongoing professional development related to teaching English to speakers of other languages. Teaching performance is reviewed annually by the director of studies observing a teaching session, and occasionally an external expert is brought in for teaching observations, to ensure objectivity. The director of studies and staff discuss the observation and the observation report. These processes provide a level of assurance as to the quality of the teaching.

Students are assessed at approximately ten-day intervals and their achievements and progress through the six levels of English language competence are monitored closely by the teachers and the director of studies. This information contributes to the review of the quality of teaching and learning.

Seafield is a small organisation and the majority of teachers have been employed for a significant period of time, 15-20 years in some cases. The evaluation team observed a high level of collegiality and coherence among staff in their focus and commitment. A high level of respect was also noted between staff and students.

As has been already noted, Seafield's focus on individual student achievement limits its ability to track overall performance, in this case of the whole student group as an indicator of the quality of teaching, or to draw any comparison between cohorts of students. However, the evaluation team did not observe any negative data that might indicate poor teaching performance. The organisation is confident that student evaluations confirm students' satisfaction with the quality of teaching.

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 **Good**.

Explanation

Seafield enrolls only international students, and the key staff directly involved with enrolling and providing support for students have a good understanding of the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (Code of Practice). Students are provided with appropriate information about New Zealand and Seafield on enrolment, and this is discussed and explained to students in their own language, ensuring they have a full understanding.

Student surveys include questions about their satisfaction with the support and guidance provided, and the answers indicate that students are very well satisfied. Students interviewed at this evaluation confirmed this view and commented that staff went out of the way to look after them.

during the school day and often after school or in the weekends. Seafield provides access to a wide range of information for out-of-school activities and often makes the bookings for students. Seafield provides a free, 24-hour emergency contact phone number to students. The manager conducts an annual review of the organisation's compliance with the Code of Practice, and while this is primarily focused on checking the accuracy and appropriateness of information provided to students, the evaluation team did not identify any concerns in the care and support of the international students or compliance with the code. Student attendance is very closely monitored and in general students' attendance is very high, indicating a high level of engagement. Staff have excellent processes to follow up students who are noted as being absent. The individual attention provided to students is a particular strength at Seafield, and this was noted in particular at student and staff interviews.

Until Seafield establishes a complete electronic database for all student information, it will be limited in its ability to identify emerging patterns or trends. The school is small and has a small student population, and the paper-based recording processes and face-to-face meetings have worked well. No issues of student care and support have emerged, and no student complaints have been lodged.

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

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

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

Explanation

Seafield is a family owned and managed operation. Governance and management functions are provided by the managing director. Teachers report directly to the director of studies who in turn reports to the managing director. There is a small administration team and a student support services team. The evaluation team noted a potential point of concern regarding the concentration of organisation records that are kept within the director of studies' paper diary. The concern is both in regard to organisational continuity in the case of these records being lost or mislaid, and also in regard to staff access to records of meetings and decisions made at these meetings.

The organisation is well led and has a strong sense of purpose and philosophy shared by all staff, which provides a high level of continuity and coherence for staff and students. The school is extremely well appointed and the buildings have been specifically designed for the current purpose, and include such features as sound-proofing between classrooms and excellent student and staff facilities. Appropriate budgets are established for maintenance and repairs and replacement of physical and learning resources.

Seafield conducts regular internal audits and has a month-by-month review calendar which currently focuses primarily on compliance issues rather than evaluating how well processes or policies are supporting learner achievement. Considerable time and effort has gone into initiatives to develop staff familiarity with an evaluative approach to quality assurance and to promote an organisational culture of reflection and improvement. The organisation has yet to fully develop policies and to clearly describe what it will do to carry out evaluative self-assessment. However,

its current processes have lead to meaningful improvements, and this evaluation found no indication that students are at risk in any way.

The organisation is actively involved with its professional association, English New Zealand, and has a clearly expressed focus on providing excellent teaching and an excellent learning environment. The current challenge is to fully establish an evaluative self-assessment system to confirm that Seafield is meeting this level of excellence.

Part 2: Performance in 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 **Good**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Student support including international students

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

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

2.3 Focus area: English language tuition

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

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

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Seafield:

- Strengthen its annual review of its compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students
- Establish a computer-based system to record all organisational data, in order to review and analyse this for emerging patterns and trends, and also to facilitate benchmarking
- Establish a closer, or overt link between teaching performance appraisals and professional development activities
- Further develop staff knowledge of evaluative quality assurance
- Develop a process or platform for staff to have improved access to relevant organisational data, such as meeting minutes and decisions.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz