

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Language Studies International (NZ)
Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 2 September 2015

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Final Report

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:	Language Studies International (NZ) Limited
Type:	Private training establishment
Location:	Level 1-4, 10-12 Scotia Place, Auckland
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	1 June 1991
Courses currently delivered:	Intensive Standard English – Language Studies International (NZ) Limited (LSI) delivers a range of components of this course, including exam preparation and English for Business.
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	International: 74 equivalent full-time students
Number of staff:	16 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	Intensive Standard English
Distinctive characteristics:	LSI's Auckland campus is one of a network of language schools operating across Europe, in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australia. The company has been operating for approximately 50 years and is owned by a single director. The school has an average of 25 nationalities studying there, including students from Brazil, Columbia, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Switzerland.
Previous quality assurance <i>Final Report</i>	At their previous external evaluation and review

history: (EER), LSI was judged Highly Confident in educational performance and Highly Confident in self-assessment.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This EER had the mandatory focus area of Governance, management and strategy and also looked at two courses, the Intensive 24 course and the Exam Preparation course. Examining these two courses gave the evaluators the opportunity to meet learners with different learning goals.

The Intensive 24 course has become increasingly popular, as there has been a change in immigration regulations. Learners studying English at a Category One organisation for over 14 weeks can now work up to 20 hours per week and during their holidays.

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 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.

Before the review, LSI provided the evaluators with a number of documents, including:

- an annual planner
- a list of the evidence available to support LSI's answers to the key evaluation questions
- a checklist of policy, procedures and documents
- a review of activity under a range of criteria, including:
 - goals and objectives
 - financial management
 - personnel
 - physical and learning resources
 - learner information entry and support
 - reporting achievement and development
 - delivery
 - review of resources.

The two-person evaluation team spent two days on campus at LSI. While on site, the team conducted interviews with the principal, director of studies, teaching staff,
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two groups of learners, student support staff and the director. The evaluation team also viewed a range of documentation that detailed aspects of the curriculum, teaching performance and professional development, attendance, meeting records and review, analysis and planning.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Language Studies International (NZ) Limited**.

Learners achieving is a strong focus for LSI. A robust placement test, weekly and level tests and teachers using the results to give useful feedback ensures that learners are clear about how well they are progressing. Exit surveys, six-weekly reflections, feedback from past learners and interviews with current learners confirm that learners are achieving well in the different skills of English language. All the learners who attempted the Cambridge exams in 2014 were successful.

Learners value their time with LSI. Exit surveys show that their experience has been as valuable for the friends they have made and the different cultures they have mixed with as for the English language skills they gained. The vast majority of learners state that they would recommend the school to others.

Well qualified staff, a well-planned curriculum (with week-by-week syllabi) and an emphasis on professional development contribute to strong teaching. The organisation has a clear mission and vision set out in its strategic plan. Strong policies and processes support a commitment to excellent instruction and a quality learning environment that is open and caring. Being just one of 15 schools spread around the world gives the organisation strong international links, and, through its membership with English New Zealand, LSI has useful New Zealand English language teaching connections and regular quality audits. At its most recent audit, in 2012, LSI met the English New Zealand standards.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Language Studies International (NZ) Limited**.

LSI has a good understanding of its key stakeholders and works hard to ensure stakeholder needs are met. The organisation has systematic approaches to gaining feedback from learners, teachers, agents and homestay families. The evaluation team saw that this feedback is collated, analysed and used to monitor and enhance quality. Engaged governance, links with other LSI schools and English New Zealand membership ensure that there is regular external scrutiny of the organisation and its systems.

The documents shared with the evaluation team showed that quality teaching and the support of learners were regularly discussed among both management and teaching and support staff. The range of monitoring systems in place mean that any issues are readily identified and, where possible, promptly addressed.

There is the opportunity for more systematic analysis of the achievement data, by cohort, level or skill set to support the understanding of teaching effectiveness. While there was some evidence that demonstrates the curriculum is being reviewed on an ongoing basis, this process could be more systematically documented. The evaluation team noted the purposeful, ongoing, and systematic nature of self-assessment at LSI. However, the evaluation team also noted that there were areas where the quality of review could be strengthened. This is why NZQA is confident in the organisation's capability in self-assessment, rather than highly confident.

Findings¹

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 **Good**.

Learner achievement at LSI is strong. Feedback from learners indicates that they are highly satisfied with the progress they are making with the development of their English language skills, and the tests and data presented by the organisation supports this. Weekly tests and level tests chart learners' progress through their time studying, and these assessments are used effectively to support learning and teaching. Tutors are monitoring the progress of their learners systematically, and this is documented and is readily reported back to learners, agents and parents.

For the First Certificate in English (FCE) and Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE) exams, LSI learners' achievement was 100 per cent in 2014. This was a small improvement on 2013, when one of the 37 learners who attempted the exam was unsuccessful.

The curriculum is benchmarked to the Common European Framework Reference and the levels of achievement are explained as a series of can-do statements. LSI collates and reports on learner achievement in the Cambridge exams courses and analyses movement between the levels. There is the opportunity to use the data for analysis of achievement by cohort, by level and skills group. This would deepen and support the development of teaching practice.

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 **Excellent**.

There is good evidence that learners value their time with LSI, not just for the language skills gained, but for the friendships and experiences gained through mixing with people from a wide range of cultures. Emails from past learners attest to value for many learners, now using their English language skills in employment at home. Exit surveys ask learners to describe their experience with LSI, and from a sample viewed it is clear that learners valued the learning, friendships and wider opportunities to learn English (for example, through their homestay and activities).

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

The vast majority of learners would recommend LSI as a place to study, and that is a strong indicator of value. Only 3 per cent of LSI learners go on to further study, and the organisation has articulation agreements with a range of public and private tertiary education organisations. However, these opportunities are rarely taken up, as the vast majority of learners return to their home countries after studying.

LSI attempts to get feedback on every aspect of the learners' experience, including feedback from and about homestays, the activities programme and from agents. The ongoing monitoring of this feedback supports LSI's understanding that it is delivering value to its learners. From January to December 2014, 96 per cent of learners stated they were either 'very happy' or 'happy' with the relevance and value of their course. This is yet another indicator that leads the evaluation team to determine that stakeholders gain excellent value of outcomes from their engagement with LSI.

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**.

LSI has excellent processes to ensure that the programmes and activities at the organisation match the needs of all stakeholders. LSI offers a range of courses, including general English, exam preparation, business English and one-to-one classes for professionals. There is also an organised activities programme (outside the classroom).

Courses and activities are regularly reviewed to ensure that learner needs are being matched. For example, the Intensive 24 course (a focus area for this EER) was designed to meet the increasing number of learners who want the opportunity to work part-time while they study. Also, the afternoon classes are under review to see how they could be more effective.

The evaluation team noted that learner feedback on social activities was not as positive as for other aspects of their experience. Ratings improved from 2013 to 2014, however, and this may be worth monitoring in 2015.

All learner needs are identified when they enter the organisation. This is done through a placement test and a first-day questionnaire. Ongoing assessment of feedback is useful for charting learners' progress and learning needs. There are other opportunities to get feedback through formal surveys at six weeks into and at the end of a learner's course. Also, learners who the evaluation team spoke to were confident they could raise any issues they may have been having.

Staff meetings are held regularly and a range of stakeholder feedback is reviewed at them. The evaluation team noted examples of enhancements, including changes to the orientation and to the textbooks being used.

Integrating technology into learning activities is an ongoing issue for LSI. LSI UK have recently introduced an e-learning site for teachers and students. While the infrastructure is improving, enabling greater use of technology, some teaching staff have been slow to engage with the new tools. LSI continues to take a cautious developmental approach to technology, with a focus on teacher professional development.

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**.

Learner feedback about the teaching at LSI is consistently positive. For 2014, 99 per cent of learners stated they were either 'happy' (19 per cent) or 'very happy' (80 per cent) with their teachers. This was also reflected in the interviews the evaluation team had with learners. The organisation has a policy of employing qualified and experienced staff and the director of studies is proactively implementing a coordinated schedule of professional development. The evaluation team heard of a range of teaching approaches being used in the classroom and teachers giving learners useful targeted feedback to support their learning. A particularly challenging class, exam preparation, is well managed by well qualified and experienced staff who structure learning and differentiate assessments tailored to the exam the learners are wanting to attempt. Learners attested to their individual needs being met.

Teaching effectiveness is monitored through learner achievement, six-weekly feedback, peer and director of studies observations and annual performance appraisals. Moderation is occurring systematically and is useful for assessing teacher judgements, although the rubric currently being used for writing could better align with the different English language proficiency levels and allow for better alignment with the organisation's curriculum. The organisation can also use its links to other organisations to engage in external moderation.

The curriculum and materials are aligned with the Common European Framework Reference. The organisation's syllabus is detailed, outlining weekly learning outcomes, resources and skills and language to be covered. While the curriculum is being reviewed on an ongoing basis, systematic reviews could be more comprehensive and documented more effectively. There is also an opportunity for LSI to refresh its NZQA-approved course, to ensure it is still current in terms of learning outcomes, teaching approaches and content. While these suggestions may enhance the teaching at LSI further, the evaluation team consider teaching at

the organisation to be excellent, with strong achievement, high rates of learner satisfaction and highly competent staff who are supported to develop in their roles.

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**.

LSI has clear processes and procedures for ensuring that learners are well guided and supported. Learners receive an orientation and an information pack on their first day, and learners the evaluation team spoke to were clear about who they could approach if they needed support. First language support and counsellors are available if required.

Learners are clear about how well they are achieving and what their next learning goals are. On entry every learner completes a questionnaire that asks them questions about their needs and goals and this is shared with their teachers to inform programme planning. In addition, every six weeks learners can review their progress and are supported to set new goals. Learner attendance is carefully monitored and those not meeting attendance requirements are followed up promptly by the administration team and principal.

LSI manages its own homestays and learners reported favourably about their experiences. Over 90 per cent said they were happy with their homestay experience. The homestay coordinator fully understands the regulations that govern homestay arrangements and responds in a timely way if any issues arise.

The organisation asks learners directly about aspects of guidance and support, and learner feedback is generally very positive. An ongoing issue a small number of learners were not so positive about was their experience of airport transfers. The principal had picked up this issue and was responding to, although this response did not appear to be coordinated across the student support team.

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 has a clear mission and goals that are articulated in a strategic plan. Learner and agent feedback indicates that the organisation is responsive to its vision statement (for example, giving learners a whole language experience and providing a quality learning experience in a caring environment). There is good evidence of planning and review, with ongoing opportunities for staff to meet and

reflect and scheduled annual reviews. The sole director takes an active interest in the school and visits New Zealand twice a year, as well as staying in regular contact with the principal.

LSI supports staff to develop in their roles with ongoing professional development, peer reviews, comprehensive reviews by the director of studies and performance appraisals. The evaluation team noted that a significant number of staff at LSI have been there for a number of years: this is an indication that they are valued. There are structured opportunities for staff to give feedback and it is clear that the organisation listens to this feedback. It is possible that responses to feedback and data, and key planning decisions, could be better communicated to staff by the management. Roles and responsibilities are mostly clear, with the role of head teacher still being progressively defined by the head teacher.

The school is well resourced, particularly in respect to teaching and learning. However, while the facilities are adequate, upgrades are planned and will add to achieving a more professional environment.

LSI gathers important feedback from its key stakeholders and uses this to monitor quality and enhance performance. Its membership in English New Zealand strengthens its performance, with three members of staff currently trained as auditors and systematic internal self-reviews ensuring compliance with English New Zealand standards. This demonstrates an ongoing commitment to delivering quality education.

The organisation reviews its compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students alongside other regulatory requirements to ensure LSI complies fully. This review was most recently done by the principal. While LSI draws upon the value gained through its international links, it is responsive to the particular local context.

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: Intensive 24 course

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: Exam preparation course/FCE/IELTS/CAE

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

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

Recommendations

There are no additional recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes 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 External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

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).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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