External Evaluation and Review Report

International Culinary Studio

Date of report: 7 May 2025

About International Culinary Studio

International Culinary Studio (ICS) provides blended online culinary education programmes leading to NZQA-approved qualifications. In addition, it also provides a range of industry-specific online culinary courses internationally.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Unit 1, 57 Warrington Street, Mairehau, Christchurch
Eligible to enrol international students:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 44; Māori 10, Pasifika two
	International: nil
Number of staff:	Five full-time equivalents and four part-time
TEO profile:	[International Culinary Studio Limited](#)
Last EER outcome:	In 2021, NZQA was Confident in ICS's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	New Zealand Certificate in Cookery (Level 4)
MoE number:	9170
NZQA reference:	C57997
Dates of EER visit:	12-14 November 2024

Summary of results

ICS is providing relevant training that is resulting in valued outcomes for students and stakeholders in the culinary industry. Self-assessment is leading to a range of changes and improvements.

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- ICS makes a valuable contribution to the culinary industry by providing online qualifications that are accessible nationwide, and by graduating students who have the skills and knowledge to work competently in the industry.

- Over the past three years, ICS has had significant challenges to overcome. Course and qualification completions have been variable, training funding has reduced, and moderation and assessment practice did not meet NZQA accreditation and approval requirements. ICS has invested time and resources addressing these issues while also planning for the future.

- ICS has improved its systems to ensure students are well supported. Improvements include weekly chef trainer check-ins, weekly meetings (online) with other students in their cohort, and increased monitoring and support for students on work placements.

- The design and delivery of the programme provides students with flexibility over how and when they study. Students apply their skills and knowledge in the real world through work placements. Some students found the workload high and difficult to maintain, a comprehensive review of the New Zealand Certificate is planned in 2025 to align with the introduction of the new qualifications in 2026.

- Governance and management have a clear vision of the future of ICS and are committed to working with stakeholders to maintain relevant, accessible and quality training options that meet the needs of industry and stakeholders. Compliance gaps are being addressed. Self-assessment activities since the last EER have

had some impact on improving student outcomes, except for Māori student achievement.

Key evaluation question findings[1]

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	**Marginal**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Students at ICS achieve useful technical skills, knowledge and real-world experience relevant to the culinary industry. Additional work-readiness skills also gained by the students include time management, self-discipline, critical thinking and problem solving.
	Course and qualification completions for ICS have been variable since 2021[2] (refer Table 1, Appendix 1). This is partly due to the impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality industry and employment prospects, but also because of high numbers of withdrawals. In response, ICS has reviewed its selection, enrolment and induction processes to ensure students accepted onto the programmes are committed to the full course of study. Student progress is monitored by chef instructors, and any students at risk of not successfully completing are identified and offered more support and assistance.
	In 2024 there were no late withdrawals from the programme[3], which is an improvement resulting from the PTE's self-assessment activities. The full impact of these changes on student achievement will only be evident once 2024 course and qualification completions have been confirmed. Based on internal monitoring of assessments, ICS expects that course completions will exceed its 70 per cent target for 2024.
	ICS is also monitoring and reporting on the educational performance of Pasifika and Māori students, which has mirrored the variability seen in the organisational data. More work is required to ensure Māori students in

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[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] ICS has rolling intakes, which means not all students finish the programme in the year they enrolled.

[3] Eighteen students withdrew early.

	particular are supported to complete their qualification. The performance of students identifying with a disability also needs to be tracked and reported. ICS is benchmarking its completion rates against other cookery training providers and Tertiary Education Commission targets, to further understand how well the PTE is performing as an organisation.
Conclusion:	Students gain valuable skills and knowledge relevant to industry. However, since 2021 less than half the number of students who enrol on the programme complete the qualification. ICS has made changes to ensure the students achieve educational success; the impact of these changes is emerging, except for Māori students.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	The outcomes gained from ICS programmes are highly valued by key stakeholders including students, graduates and employers. Students already employed in industry as unqualified chefs have the opportunity to pursue a formal qualification and progress in the industry; or they have gained employment as a result of their time spent in the workplace as part of the programme. ICS monitoring data suggests that at least half of the graduates are employed in the industry. Employers are gaining work-ready employees who have the relevant culinary skills to work competently and confidently as a commis chef in a high-pressure kitchen environment. Employers also attested to the value of the qualification to industry and how well graduates progress in their culinary careers as a result of the skills gained from the programme. In addition, the New Zealand level 4 cookery programme is mapped to the City and Guilds programme which enables students to gain a digital badge recognised in the hospitality industry overseas. ICS maintains and keeps records of its engagement with industry through work placements and industry events to ensure the training is current and relevant. Graduate

	destinations are formally tracked and reviewed to understand the valued gained by graduates as a result of completing the qualification, including where graduates have gained employment.
Conclusion:	ICS is making a positive and valued contribution to the culinary industry. Graduates are gaining employment and progressing in their careers as a result of their training. Employers are gaining entry-level employees who can work confidently and competently in the industry.

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:	ICS is the only training provider in New Zealand offering the level 4 cooking programme online. The design of the programme includes structured online videos and written content for students to review in their own time and at their own pace, regular conversations with the chef instructor, and work placement.
	The programme requires students to make decisions around time management, food purchasing, budgets and managing waste, which are an advantage for students wanting to enter the industry. As the students study from home, trial and error is encouraged to ensure they learn and grow their culinary practice. ICS has also introduced micro-credentials to provide more bespoke learning opportunities for students who do not require or have the time to complete a full qualification.
	The level 4 programme has been reviewed since the last EER to address inconsistencies in the systems and processes supporting assessment. A redesign of the programme to align with the new qualifications is planned for 2025. As part of the redesign it is recommended that ICS ensure the number of assessments are manageable for students.
	Work placement is a key feature of the programme, and an opportunity to apply skills in a high-pressure yet supported

	environment. Students must find their own suitable work placement[4] and complete the food and workplace safety modules before they start their work experience. Work placements are monitored by ICS to ensure the students have an opportunity to develop their skills.
	ICS maintains academic integrity in several ways:
	- through video evidence that shows the student completing the full process of a cookery activity to demonstrate that the work completed is their own - chef instructor conversations with the students - moderation - the final exam which is completed in person in front of the assessor.
	An online plagiarism checker is used to validate that theory assessments and photo evidence submitted by the students is their own.
	ICS has systems and processes in place to ensure moderation takes place and is used to inform assessment. External moderation is completed under arrangement with another tertiary training provider to provide assurance that the assessments are valid and to identify areas for improvement.
	Currently, ICS internally moderates questions within assessments rather than the whole assessment. This practice provides ICS with the opportunity to review and refine assessment questions that students consistently find difficult. However, this practice may not provide ICS or NZQA with assurance that the intent and principles of moderation are being met, including whether learning outcomes are being met; whether the whole assessment is valid; and whether assessment practice is fair and consistent across all students.
Conclusion:	ICS programme design and online delivery is an innovative approach to delivering cookery programmes to students nationwide. Skills and knowledge gained are applied in work placements. Qualifications are designed to be recognised internationally. Academic quality assurance

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[4] ICS will find work placements for any students struggling to find a suitable placement on their own.

Final

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| | (including programme review, internal moderation and assessment) requires ongoing strengthening and review. |

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

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	ICS's is continuing to review and improve its systems to ensure students studying at a distance are provided with suitable pastoral and academic support when needed.

ICS has reviewed and improved its 360 High Contact model to ensure students have access to a broad range of pastoral support in their homes, from their peers online, in the workplace, and with the instructor. The extent to which the model contributes to improvements in student achievement is yet to be determined.

- Pre-enrolment interviews ensure students have a good understanding of the workload and time required to complete the programme of study before they enrol.

- Cohorts of students are now enrolled monthly to better monitor and manage progress. Cohorts are supported to meet regularly online to create communities of learning and support.

- Chef instructors regularly check in to ensure students are on track with their learning.

- Students monitor their own learning and progress against a study plan to develop discipline and diligence with support from their chef instructor.

- Students are supported on their work placements by employers.

- Online learning resources help students to navigate and engage in their learning.

Disabilities are disclosed at enrolment, and ICS provides one-on-one support to students to address any learning difficulties. In some cases, ICS also works closely with the students' families/whānau. Student feedback is sought

	from induction through to exit interviews to inform areas for improvement.
Conclusion:	ICS students are well supported pastorally and academically. Students have an opportunity to build collegial relationships with other students and employers as part of their distance learning.

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

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	ICS is a small, cohesive team that is governed and managed by the director who has a depth of experience in the culinary industry. External challenges, including Covid-19 and a reduction in funding, have put pressure on the financial resources of the organisation. As a result, the director is investing more resources and time in the business. The director is working closely with a strategic advisor to ensure ICS maintains relevance and viability into the future.
	The director has a clear vision for the organisation and a commitment to cultivating chefs who can work nationally and internationally. To achieve this vision, ICS keeps up to date with changes and developments in the culinary industry internationally to ensure ICS qualifications are recognised overseas. The director is also thinking innovatively about how advances in technology, including AI and augmented reality, can be embedded into future online cookery programmes to improve the learning experience for the students. New relationships have also been forged with the Ministry of Social Development locally and nationally to extend the training to new cohorts of students.
	ICS also has a range of international partnerships and affiliations with organisations overseas, which provides opportunities for New Zealand students to gain qualifications that are recognised internationally.
	ICS collects a significant amount of data through surveys from students and employers, and conversations with

	stakeholders. The data is analysed and used to understand performance and areas for improvement.
	While ICS has a strong background in the industry, the PTE did not meet level 5 programme monitoring requirements. This suggests that stronger academic leadership, including programme development and review, is needed to provide ICS with confidence that all its programmes are meeting academic standards. ICS has an academic board which meets annually to monitor achievement, quality and academic risks. An external chef has been recently appointed to the academic board and is due to start in 2025. An external appointment will help to maintain alignment with industry needs.
	Chef instructors are from the industry and have been well supported into their trainer roles. Professional development is encouraged, including specific training to understand Māori values and what this means for Māori students' achievement using the conceptual model, Te Whare Tapawhā. Evidence was also provided of events and activities chef instructors participate in to stay relevant with industry and to keep up with changes in tertiary education.
Conclusion:	ICS has a clear vision and strategy led by an experienced leadership team. Challenges are being carefully managed to ensure business continuity.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	**Marginal**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	ICS has a good understanding of its main PTE compliance requirements. These are tracked through regular team meetings, diary notes and team conversations which is adequate for a small organisation. Academic team meetings and academic board meetings provide high-level assurance that important academic compliance and risks are being managed. However, some inconsistencies were noted in programme information made available to students on the website and in brochures relating to programme eligibility.

	This suggests a need for regular review and monitoring of operational academic compliance matters.

Furthermore, the level 5 programme did not meet programme and approval rules. An action plan was put in place and the majority of actions have been accepted. Another review is scheduled for 2025. Changes have been made to the level 4 programme based on feedback from the EER in 2021. However, it is recommended that ICS continuously review its approach to internal moderation to ensure it is meeting assessment and moderation principles.

ICS is continuing to work collaboratively with the Tertiary Education Commission to provide assurance to stakeholders that ICS has addressed the issues impacting student achievement. |
| Conclusion: | ICS has not met important compliance accountabilities. Gaps are being managed and improvements are in place. |

Focus area

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

2.1 New Zealand Certificate in Cookery (Level 4)

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**

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 ICS:

- Continuously review its moderation practice to ensure that learning outcomes are being met, assessments are valid, and assessment practice is fair and consistent for all students.

- Track and report on the progress of students who identify with a disability.

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: ICS student numbers and qualification completions[5]

Year	Total number of students	Qualification completion (all students)	Qualification completion Māori (enrolments)	Qualification completion Pasifika (enrolments)
2021	55	52%	50% (7)	33% (2)
2022	46	26%	0% (13)	25% (4)
2023	37	53%	0% (8)	100% (2)
2024	44	63.24%	56.91% (9)	0% (1[6])

Source: International Culinary Studio

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[5] ICS enrols cohorts of students throughout the year; therefore, the 2024 data reflects the number of students who have completed the qualification as at March 2025. Some students are still completing the qualification.

[6] This student has withdrawn.

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud[7]*

- *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.*

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[7] 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.

Final

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*

- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*

- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.

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

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, training schemes and consents to assess and registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021. The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz). All rules cited above are available at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/.

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