

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Polyethnic Institute of Studies

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

Not Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 2 December 2011

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name	Polyethnic Institute of Studies (Polyethnic Institute)
Location:	20 Otara Rd, Otara, Auckland
Type:	Private Training Establishment
First registered:	2004
Number of students:	Domestic (Tertiary Education Commission-funded): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Polyethnic Certificate in ESOL (Level 3) (20 students)• Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (part-time) (80 students) International: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Polyethnic Certificate in ESOL (Level 3) (15 students)
Number of staff:	Managing director, office manager, course director, academic dean, plus three full-time teaching staff
Scope of active accreditation:	New Zealand Qualifications Framework accreditation for various domains up to level 3 in the areas of ESOL, communication, retail, service sector, business, and computing. In June 2011, Polyethnic Institute was accredited by NZQA to deliver and assess the National Diploma in Business Administration (Level 5).
Sites:	Head office and training centre, Otara, Auckland
Distinctive characteristics:	Polyethnic Institute evolved from a community development initiative in the early 2000s. The organisation was purchased by the current owner in 2003 and formally

	established as a PTE in 2004.
Recent significant changes:	N/A
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>The previous quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in September 2008, found Polyethnic Institute to be largely compliant, although the moderation of assessments was not meeting requirements. This issue is not yet resolved.</p> <p>Polyethnic Institute is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.</p> <p>Polyethnic Institute is currently compliant with mandatory student fee protection requirements.</p>

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope for the external evaluation and review consisted of the mandatory focus areas:

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

The following focus areas constitute all of Polyethnic Institute's current programme portfolio:

- Polyethnic Certificate in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (Level 3, 102 credits)
- Adult Intensive Literacy and Numeracy courses.

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 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 external evaluation and review (EER) was conducted in late June 2011. Prior to the EER visit, the lead evaluator visited the site and met with the managing director and the office manager to agree the EER scope. A one and a half-day EER visit was made to the Polyethnic Institute site in Otara, where the evaluation team, consisting of the lead evaluator and one other evaluator, met with the managing director, management staff, teaching staff, students, and community representatives.

Polyethnic Institute of Studies has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the educational performance of **the Polyethnic Institute of Studies**.

Polyethnic Institute could not comprehensively demonstrate the long-term benefits of its programmes. Polyethnic Institute has a manual process to record the employment or further study destinations of ESOL students, but this information is not analysed and used to make improvements to the design and delivery of the programme. Information regarding outcomes of the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme was informal, anecdotal, and sketchy.

Evidence from the community members present at the EER indicates that Polyethnic Institute engages well with its community and is valued for the contribution it makes. Community members, staff, and students all commented on the hugely positive influence the organisation has made on the lives of some of its students.

At 61 per cent, qualification completion rates on the ESOL programme are, according to Tertiary Education Commission information, approximate to the national average. The TEO has not benchmarked itself in any other manner. Staff are expecting the current cohort of 20 students to achieve approximately 85-90 per cent qualification completion. Achievement on the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme was difficult to determine at the time of the EER visit as the TEO has not summarised the results of pre- and post-course assessment. Summary information received since, indicates that 79 per cent of Polytechnic Institute's Intensive Literacy and Numeracy students have progressed at least one step in numeracy and one of the literacy bands. The TEC minimum requirement is 80 per cent progression.

Feedback from students indicates that courses have an appropriate mix of theory and practice and that courses are delivered in a manner that enables learners to understand and achieve. Teachers and students relate well to each other.

Polyethnic Institute's pre-enrolment guidance for the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme is poor, resulting in some students entering the programme with insufficient levels of English to enable them to engage properly in the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme and achieve the learning outcomes.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Not Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **the Polyethnic Institute of Studies**.

There is little evidence that the TEO recognises the value of self-assessment and systematically uses it as a tool to improve its educational performance. To date, improvement has tended to be intuitive, reactive, and piecemeal rather than as a result of systematic long-term planning. Polyethnic Institute has systems for gathering learner

feedback, but there was no evidence that this information was being used to make improvements to the programmes.

Individual student unit standard achievement was being tracked on the ESOL programme. Although the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy students are being assessed at the beginning and end of the programme using the National Assessment Tool (NAT), this information was not being used to inform the teaching programme. Teaching staff were not aware of, and did not have ready access to, the NAT assessment results. Staff were therefore planning and delivering their teaching in isolation from the NAT results.

The challenge for Polyethnic Institute is to direct its self-assessment efforts into developing a greater level of understanding of educational principles and how to use this understanding to bring about improvements linked to measurable educational outcomes.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

At 61 per cent, qualification completion rates on the ESOL programme are, according to Tertiary Education Commission information, approximate to the national average. The TEO has not benchmarked its ESOL results in any other way. Staff are expecting the current cohort of 20 students to achieve approximately 85-90 per cent qualification completion. Results to date, half-way through the programme, indicate that they are on track to do so. Management staff believe that this increase in achievement is mainly due to using the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme as a preparation and selection tool for the ESOL programme. Achievement on the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme was difficult to determine as at the time of the EER visit, the TEO had not summarised the results of pre- and post-course assessment. Hence the TEO does not quantify the numbers of students who they expect to achieve, at what rate they expect achievement to occur, and what they expect students to learn. Summary information received since the EER visit, indicates that 79 per cent of Polytechnic Institute's Intensive Literacy and Numeracy students have progressed at least one step in numeracy and one of the literacy bands. The TEC minimum requirement is 80 per cent progression.

The organisation does not have a systematic approach to increasing student achievement, and staff do not appear to have an in-depth understanding of the factors that contribute to student success. They do not have systems in place for planning and regularly monitoring incremental achievement to enable the teaching to be tailored accordingly. Monitoring student achievement on a week-by-week basis is largely based on the intuition of the teaching staff. It is likely, therefore, that individual student success is the result of individual student and/or staff effort rather than methodical processes by Polyethnic Institute. Successful qualification completion may improve graduates' employment prospects or open opportunities for further study.

There is a strong emphasis on the spiritual, emotional, and social needs of the students as perceived by Polyethnic Institute management. While these aspects are important, educational achievement appears to be a secondary consideration. Student feedback indicates varying levels of acceptance of the non-academic activities and some learners felt their learning was marginalised by using their time in this manner.

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

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

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

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

Polyethnic Institute could not comprehensively demonstrate the long-term benefits of its programmes. Polyethnic Institute has a book in which the employment or further study destinations of most of the ESOL students are recorded, but this information is not summarised or analysed and used to make improvements to the design and delivery of the programme. Information regarding outcomes of the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme was anecdotal and sketchy.

Evidence from the community members present at the EER indicates that Polyethnic Institute engages well with its community and is valued for the contribution it makes. Community members, staff, and students all commented on the hugely positive influence the organisation has had on the lives of some of its students by assisting them to learn English to improve their ability to engage with the wider community. Some of these students had resided in New Zealand for years or even decades but had not previously taken the opportunity to learn English.

Management staff reported that some of the graduates from the ESOL programme go on to further study at Manukau Institute of Technology or Best Training. Polyethnic staff have occasional conversations with representatives from the destination organisations but do not systematically use the information gained to shape improvements.

The majority of international students enter the programme with the aim of progressing to a level 5 qualification, gaining a work permit and, ultimately, permanent residency. Several individual successes on this pathway were cited, but there was no formal analysis of how many students achieve this goal or an analysis of the ways in which they could be assisted. Polyethnic Institute has subscribed to a book called *How to Get a Job*, which has Polytechnic Institute's name over-printed on the cover, and provides a copy to each student at the beginning of their course to assist them to find work to supplement their study. The book is comprehensive but unlikely to be easily understood and used by someone at the beginning of an ESOL or literacy programme.

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 **Poor**.

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

It is unclear how external relationships enhance the quality of the programmes being delivered at Polyethnic Institute. The main source of external input appears to be through church organisations. More effective stakeholder engagement at all levels of the organisation would improve educational outcomes for students.

The TEO has an advisory board which is made up primarily of members of staff and their partners. Although the advisory board is meeting regularly, without significant external input the board will not be able to assist the organisation to reflect on how it is performing and how it can improve.

A new business administration advisory committee has recently been formed to support the development of the level 5 National Diploma in Business Administration. Records showed that there are only two regular attendees at the meetings, one of whom is a staff member. In fact, one meeting, in which a number of decisions were recorded, had only one attendee, who was the Polyethnic Institute staff member. This programme has been developed solely to address the need expressed by the students for a level 5 qualification that will give them the opportunity to apply for a work permit. It is noted that there is no learning pathway to bridge ESOL level 3 to a level 5 business diploma. There was no evidence of reference to employers or the labour market in the development.

The organisation has made efforts to seek feedback from learners. However, despite some significant level of dissatisfaction raised in some of the surveys viewed, there was no indication that the issues had been raised or addressed. Management was not able to cite examples of how course content and delivery methodology had been changed as a result of feedback from learners or external stakeholders.

Of concern was the mismatch between the needs of a large percentage of the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme students and the intent of the programme. Many of the 80 places funded in the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme have been taken up by migrants, many of whom travel to Otara from other Auckland suburbs. Some of these students have insufficient understanding of English to be able to attempt the National Assessment Tool. For most, it is not literacy, and certainly not numeracy, that they lack, but English language development. The existence of a free and available programme appears to have led to the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme being informally adapted to try to cater for learners who would be better off on an ESOL programme. Restricting entry to the programme to those who have reasonable English but require literacy and/or numeracy development may raise achievement and also enable some of the locally based students who are currently on the waiting list to access a valuable literacy and numeracy development opportunity. This would be a better reflection of the intent of the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy guidelines through which this programme is funded.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Teachers and students relate well to each other. Students spoke highly of Polyethnic Institute's teaching staff. They liked the open, friendly style and found their learning activities interesting and challenging. Students have regular access to the teaching staff.

Course evaluations completed by the learners contain lots of feedback. However, the processes stop at the collection and collation of data and there was no evidence that the

information collected is systematically informing improvements to teaching practice. A more systematic approach following the gathering of feedback, which could include reporting back to students on actions taken, is essential and may improve educational outcomes for students.

Polyethnic Institute's website makes statements such as, "the Institute has proven itself a leader in this [language acquisition] field in New Zealand". There is no empirical evidence to support this statement and it is difficult to see how it could be substantiated, when few of the staff engage with professional bodies associated with the teaching of ESOL.

As a result of not meeting NZQA external moderation standards, Polyethnic Institute has recently contracted external expertise to assist with the moderation of assessments for the ESOL programme. This input has led to improvement in the nature of assessments, although at the time of the EER the second resubmission of the organisation's moderation action plan had not been approved by NZQA.

Polyethnic Institute has purchased pre-developed resources and assessments for the forthcoming National Diploma in Business Administration course. In doing so, there is a risk that the NDBA programme will be taught as a series of individual unit standards as opposed to a cohesive and integrated curriculum. Given that Polyethnic Institute had not recruited someone to teach the programme three weeks before the planned start, there is a danger that this will be the result.

Although there was evidence of Polyethnic Institute providing opportunities for staff to participate in authentic and meaningful discussion about teaching practice, there was still a marked absence of underpinning adult education principles in most of the material viewed. For instance, Polyethnic Institute has recently introduced a peer observation procedure. All staff have participated, but it appears at this stage to be a matter of compliance rather than an opportunity for genuine reflection with colleagues on teaching practice. More regular and ongoing feedback of a formative nature would lead to better teaching practice.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

Polyethnic Institute is passionate about the care and support it provides for the students. Christian belief is core to the organisation, and staff members believe strongly in practising what they espouse. However, the TEO has not specifically and systematically linked student support to student achievement and the support provided tends to be spontaneous and driven by the immediate needs of the students. A more analytical and methodical approach to student support could lead to increased completion rates.

Polyethnic Institute's pre-enrolment guidance for the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme is deficient, resulting in some students entering the programme with insufficient levels of English to enable them to engage properly in the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme and achieve the learning outcomes. More careful screening, guidance, and

selection of students would enhance their opportunities to progress and learn in the programme.

The staff offer support and coaching for those students seeking employment in New Zealand. Staff did not have any data available on the success of the service, nor had the TEO attempted to gain feedback from students six or 12 months later on how well prepared they were for employment. Better information would inform self-assessment decisions and business improvements and, if the results were positive, could be useful for Polyethnic Institute's marketing.

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

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

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

Polyethnic Institute is managed by the managing director/owner. Management and staff are passionate and dedicated to the organisation and its students. The EER team is concerned, however, about the suitability of the current facilities to accommodate Polyethnic Institute's planned expansion in student numbers and programme level.

Polyethnic Institute's website is not an accurate representation of the resources and facilities offered. Very few of the photographs are actually of the institute's facilities, especially the multi-storied building in the backdrop. Some statements on the website are difficult to decipher and contain grammatical and spelling errors, e.g. "*westernised mythology of Teaching*". An organisation teaching English language should be cognisant of the need to ensure that its key advertising material is grammatically accurate.

Clearly, there has been movement towards improved self-assessment and the TEO has made an effort to understand and improve educational performance of the ESOL programme. Self-assessment has generally been intuitive and based around the spiritual and social needs of the students and the familial values of the organisation rather than a focus on educational achievement.

The challenge for Polyethnic Institute is to direct its efforts into developing a greater level of understanding of educational principles and bringing about consequent improvement by a more systematic analysis and consequent action from self-assessment activities.

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 **Poor**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Student support Including international students

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

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

Polyethnic Institute is providing a supportive learning environment for its international students and is keeping in contact outside of the normal hours of tuition. The students interviewed at this evaluation were very positive about their experience at Polyethnic Institute and of the quality of the support offered, and it was evident that they regularly recommend the organisation to their friends and colleagues.

2.3 Focus Area: Polyethnic Certificate in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (Level 3)

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

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

2.4 Focus Area: Adult Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme

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

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review other than those implied or expressed within the report.

Appendix

Regulatory 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 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).

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

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