External Evaluation and Review Report

English Voyage Academy Limited

Date of report: 2 May 2023

About English Voyage Academy Limited

English Voyage Academy (Evakona) provides English language education and New Zealand High School Preparation to international teenage students.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	18 South Highway, Whitianga
Eligible to enrol intl students:	Yes
Number of students:	International: 19 students, 2022 cohort[1]
Number of staff:	Full-time, eight; part-time, 10
TEO profile:	Evakona
Last EER outcome:	At the previous EER, conducted on 5 and 6 March 2019, NZQA was Highly Confident in Evakona's educational performance and Highly Confident in the PTE's capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	• International students; support and wellbeing • High School Preparation Training Scheme (ID 107272)
MoE number:	7471
NZQA reference:	C52173
Dates of EER visit:	27 and 28 February 2023

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[1] The academic year for Evakona began after the date of this EER; the enquiry phase included the 2022 cohort who had recently graduated and started at local New Zealand high schools. The expected number of students starting the 2023 year at Evakona is 40 students.

Summary of results

Evakona has strong support systems that enable students to integrate and transition successfully into New Zealand life, using the English skills gained. Self-assessment systems are effective at bringing about improvements to programme delivery.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Student support is individualised and tailored to the student. Evakona understands and responds effectively to meet students' aims.

- Evakona tracks and monitors students' academic progression. As a result, staff are clearly informed and able to offer the students valuable feedback.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Students improve their English language and subject knowledge abilities, preparing themselves for entry into New Zealand high schools. Self-management, a greater independence and cultural knowledge are other skills the students acquire.

- Management has been effective at responding to change. There are continuous improvements to programme delivery and design as well as operational systems. Some aspects of Evakona's systems need to mature further to enhance effective self-assessment. This includes presenting performance data that clearly represents the students, and better evidencing of a whole-of-organisation approach to self-review.

- Evakona is responsive to stakeholder input and feedback. This is well evidenced, for example, in adjustments to teaching and learning.

- Moderation systems need better alignment across the organisation. While there is some evidence of internal moderation systems working well, this is an area for improvement organisationally.

Key evaluation question findings[2]

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Students acquire useful skills and knowledge, gain independence and the confidence to integrate into New Zealand high schools.
	Nearly all students progress one level of the CEFR[3] during their stay at Evakona, and most students gain a significant proportion of the course credit values possible. There is significant analysis at individual level from start, mid-course and end-year tests. The trends in performance across the cohorts leads to change and developments in programme design. Examples of this analysis is the removal of NCEA Literacy Level 1 – which students struggled with – and the focus on improving reading skills. Since these initiatives, credit achievement rates have improved.[4]
	Feedback to students and reporting of achievement is thorough and informative. There is regular reporting to parents and collaborating high schools on the students' progress and achievement. Students receive one-on-one progress checks, quarterly reports and a Record of Achievement.
	Attendance has been consistently high, even for online, offshore students. Retention rates are high also, indicating that a carefully monitored pre-entry system is working well for Evakona.
	Staff are fully cognisant of individual student performance and are effective at contributing to improved outcomes. However, the presentation of aggregated data to show trends in a meaningful way needs improvement. Evakona needs to keep

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

[3] The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability.

[4] See Table 1, Appendix 1.

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	informed of NZQA achievement reporting requirements, for example including achievement rates for disabled learners.
Conclusion:	Students are achieving their aim of becoming prepared to enter high schools as independent, informed learners. There is strong evidence of improved outcomes.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Students and stakeholders emphasised that the value of the outcomes encompasses more than academic achievement. The growth in personal skills and willingness to integrate into everyday New Zealand life and gain meaningful friendships are highly valued by stakeholders.
	Evakona effectively gathers and analyses feedback from all major stakeholders to better understand how to meet their needs. Changes to programme delivery are the result of feedback from major stakeholders, local high schools and parents as well as management oversight.
	A strength of this organisation is the individualised matching of each student to an appropriate high school that best matches their interests and needs. Evakona remains connected with students after they enter their high school of choice. This extra support contributes to the high rates of retention at the schools.[5] Oversight and understanding of value continues after the student leaves the PTE.
	Evakona works proactively to facilitate student integration at community level. Involvement with community groups, sports clubs and local homestays contributes to the economic and cultural growth of some smaller New Zealand towns.
Conclusion:	There is high value of outcomes for students and stakeholders. Strong communication and connection with stakeholders contribute to these excellent outcomes.

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[5] See Table 2, Appendix 1.

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1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Evakona delivers a programme designed to give students varying opportunities to immerse themselves in New Zealand life and build social and academic skills. Formative assessments from a CEFR-linked text builds general English proficiency skills. The high preparation aspects of the course consist of unit standards and the acquisition of life skills and an understanding of the New Zealand education system. The two branches of the course form part of a carefully prepared year programme that progressively builds confidence and skill. Feedback from parents, agents and local high schools is fed into an ongoing review of the programme and drives change and improvements. There is a clear and well-planned curriculum identifying learning outcomes and assessments, while relevant materials and resources are all hyperlinked and easily accessible to staff. This contributes to consistently good teaching practice. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic about their role and the support that management offers. There are clear internal moderation processes that support ESOL[6] staff in assessment decisions. This good practice has resulted in positive national moderation results. Maths delivery, although sound, would benefit from amalgamating with a whole-of-organisation approach to moderation. This could include external moderation support. The weak national moderation results for maths, although impacting on the effectiveness of self-assessment practice, has a lower credit value in the course and therefore does not impact on the overall performance rating.
Conclusion:	Programme delivery is well matched to the needs of stakeholders. There is clear and convincing evidence of improvements driven by review. A whole-of-organisation approach to moderation would improve the validation of assessment practice.

[6] English for Speakers of Other Languages

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	A strong system of student support enables students to progress through their studies. Support begins offshore at pre-enrolment with student, parent and school interviews. The commitment to gaining a full picture of a potential student ensures that student needs and interests are clearly articulated; any extra learning disabilities are understood and, if appropriate, additional learning plans put in place. Staff are well connected and work together to support students holistically. Academic staff work closely with support staff to monitor the students and manage their wellbeing and academic progress.
	The need to deliver the programme via a blended mode due to border closures has led to improvements in accessibility for students and teachers, and better visibility of records.
	Careful monitoring of progression and strong feedback systems contribute to an effective system that supports students towards their main goal: being suitably prepared for enrolment at a high school. Evakona works with students and high school staff throughout the year to guide decision-making. Once at the school, Evakona continues to support and monitor students with regional bilingual counsellors. The high school staff interviewed all attested to the value that this service provided to students and schools.
	Staff are well informed and adept at managing the requirements of the Code of Practice. Student records are well kept and managed. In many regards, Evakona has support systems that supersede these requirements. One example of this is the management and support of homestays. Clear, consistent and ongoing communication and feedback opportunities improve this important service.
Conclusion:	Strong student support systems and services contribute to high quality delivery of student wellbeing and academic support, which is carefully monitored for effectiveness.

1.5 How well does governance and management support learner achievement?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Evakona benefits from sound leadership, with years of experience and long-standing relationships with key stakeholders, agents and Japanese schools. The strong connections with both onshore and offshore stakeholders ensures that the purpose and mission of the organisation is well understood and their needs responded to.
	Evakona currently has agreements with nine local high schools. Interviews with staff attest to the ongoing communication between them that improves outcomes and the high quality of the service they provide. The schools have all hosted Evakona students over the years, and report the students as being better prepared for study and New Zealand life than from other sources.
	Evakona responded quickly and effectively to facilitate and support students offshore during Covid. The NZQA offshore validation report of September 2021 reported that the course was managed effectively to meet student needs. The change to blended learning has improved communication lines between staff and students, and consolidated resources and curriculum documents into one central place.
	Developments and new initiatives are often the result of stakeholder feedback, and all staff have the opportunity to contribute. Reporting on these changes is relatively informal. This has been fit for the size of the organisation. With the potential for growth in student numbers, Evakona would benefit from adopting a more regular and systematic form of reviewing their performance, including programme review.
	There is a comprehensive system of teacher observations and annual appraisal for ESOL staff, and professional development has been encouraged for all staff. Consolidating the observations to include the maths and computing teaching should be a priority, engaging in external advice where necessary.
	As mentioned in 1.1, current data analysis, although valid, lacks clarity in presentation.

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Conclusion:	Management has developed effective processes to support educational achievement, often in response to stakeholder feedback. Evakona needs to now develop more mature systems to monitor and report accurately on these processes.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Most of the PTE's compliance accountabilities are managed well.
	NZQA requirements are up to date. This includes credit reporting, attestations and self-review against the Code of Practice. Staff are well informed of the Code and support each other's roles, offering another check of process. Programmes are being delivered in line with programme approval documents. However, Evakona now needs to continue to involve NZQA in future developments, for example the transition of the training scheme to micro-credentials.
	A moderation plan in response to the national external moderation report of maths is in place. It is too early to gauge its effectiveness.
	International student files are well managed, and an audit of student files raised no concerns. Evakona has sound policies for risk management in delivering education for under 18-year-olds.
	A well-constructed and detailed annual quality assurance calendar ensures that compliance activities are completed in a timely manner.
	Agent agreements are kept up to date and agents are well informed of their responsibilities against the Code of Practice. Relationships are long, and Evakona is well trusted by stakeholders.
Conclusion:	Evakona manages its compliance accountabilities well. Management is encouraged to continue to engage with NZQA to develop the organisation further.

Focus areas

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

2.1   International students; support and wellbeing

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**

2.2   High School Preparation Training Scheme

Performance:	**Excellent**
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 English Voyage Academy Limited:

- Present aggregated data more clearly so that staff and other readers have a full view of all students and their performance. This will assist in the future, particularly with expected growth in numbers.

- Systematise internal moderation processes across the organisation and record evidence of changes and improvements in assessment practice.

- Continue or extend professional consultation with external academic advisors. This offers further support, guidance and direction for all staff.

- Explore opportunities to engage all staff in organisational or programme review.

- Continue to work with NZQA to strengthen programme offerings.

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. High School Preparation Training Scheme – student performance data

	2022	2021	2020	2019
Enrolled	22	20	24	18
Completed	19	17	24	18
Average attendance rate	95%	97%	97%	95%
Percentage of students who gained full credits	63%	61%	16%	0%

Table 2. New Zealand High School Preparation retention rates on completion of training scheme

Intake year	2022	2021	2020	2019
Enrolled	28	0	17	18
Completed	-	0	14	18

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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.

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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