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# External Evaluation and Review Report

ACG Norton College

Date of report: 11 December 2018

# About ACG Norton College

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*ACG Norton College solely and exclusively delivers (since 2003) the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Certificate in Foundation Studies programme predominantly to international learners.*

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Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	345 Queen Street, Auckland
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: two learners (Chinese)  International: 148 learners from different international markets; 64 per cent are Chinese, being the largest international market enrolled
Number of staff:	5.6 full-time and 5.6 part-time equivalents
TEO profile:	See: <a href="#">NZQA - ACG Norton College</a>  ACG Norton College is part of ACG Education. The AUT Certificate in Foundation Studies is the sole programme delivered and is being taught out. New learners enrol with ACG International.
Last EER outcome:	In 2014, NZQA was Highly Confident in ACG Norton's educational performance and Confident in its capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	The two focus areas for this evaluation are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AUT Certificate in Foundation Studies (level 3)</li><li>• International Students: Support and Wellbeing</li></ul>
MoE number:	7601
NZQA reference:	C28145
Dates of EER visit:	12 and 13 September, and 12 October <sup>1</sup> 2018

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<sup>1</sup> The evidence synthesis was completed on this date after review of further information.

# Summary of Results

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*High achievement and valued outcomes are supported by a quality learning environment and excellent pastoral care. Some data limitations have been managed to understand learner outcomes. Self-assessment is effective and purposeful.*

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| <b>Highly Confident in educational performance</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Excellent teaching, learning and support results in high achievement and valued outcomes.</li><li>• A high standard of pastoral care is supported by close monitoring, early intervention and access to services.</li><li>• Self-assessment information is used purposefully to support learners' progress. Some data limitations in the student management system are being reviewed, including improved attendance monitoring.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Confident in capability in self-assessment</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The college responded promptly to fill a gap in information about learners' pathways, but needs to identify how it will follow graduates' academic progress at AUT.</li><li>• The programme is continuously reviewed and enhanced by new technology and initiatives whose impact is reviewed. A close relationship exists with AUT, including for exam moderation, programme change, review and improvement.</li><li>• There is an opportunity to achieve better staff engagement with AUT academic staff to enhance moderation and programme review. Information to learners could be improved. The documentation of key compliance processes and policy changes and the review of their implementation could be enhanced.</li></ul> |

## Key evaluation question findings<sup>2</sup>

<b>1.1 How well do students achieve?</b>	
Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Good</b>
	<p>High achievement is supported by an engaging learning environment, diverse curriculum, effective teaching, and excellent learner care and support. For the period 2014 to 2017, a 92 per cent successful completion rate for the programme was achieved.</p> <p>Improved attrition has been sustained over time. In 2016, 20 learners withdrew (about 7 per cent), 23 in 2017 and 10 at the time of the EER. Nearly all graduates receive an offer of place from AUT (refer Findings 1.2).</p> <p>The student management system does not enable automatic tracking of learner achievement by subject. Notwithstanding, the college manually analyses data to review the impact of initiatives on achievement – for example, the implementation of ‘flipped classrooms’<sup>3</sup> and changed English curriculum.</p> <p>Attendance monitoring is effective and attendance is not typically below 95 per cent. The college is upgrading its system to automatically analyse attendance by subject.</p>
Conclusion:	High completions and rates of offer from AUT are supported by effective teaching, learning and student support, and close learner tracking. Self-assessment data, while somewhat limited by the capability of the student management system, is used to purposefully analyse the impact of new initiatives and track progress.

<sup>2</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation’s activities.

<sup>3</sup> Flipped classroom is the reverse of traditional instruction. For example, learners engage in course materials and watch a teacher-created video before attending class. In class, teachers guide learners to clarify and apply their learning.

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

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Good</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The programme offers excellent value to learners and AUT. Successful completion of the programme is recognised for entrance to all New Zealand universities. ACG Norton has exclusively provided the programme since 2003.</p> <p>Learners are well prepared for university, developing skills important to university study (e.g. independent learning, familiarity with blackboard, academic writing). Graduates report that these skills have served them well at university. Graduates succeed in their first year at AUT. Between 2012 and 2016, 95 per cent achieved an average grade of 'C' or better (and passed). AUT's 2018 prospectus identifies that the success rates of ACG Norton graduates who have commenced AUT degrees has exceeded that of other student groups. For the period 2014 to 2016, 97.6 per cent of graduates received offers to AUT – 85 per cent at degree level. In 2017 the offer rate was 100 per cent, with 86 per cent at degree offer. Graduates' uptake of AUT offers appears to average 50-60 per cent, with higher uptake for degrees over certificates or diplomas. In 2018, graduate tracking shows that a further 13 per cent of graduates pathwayed to other providers, and 5 per cent returned to ACG Norton. ACG Norton's self-assessment identifies several factors influencing uptake of AUT programmes (e.g. timing of start dates, programme offerings, graduates moving from Auckland).</p> <p>From 2016, AUT stopped providing data on ACG Norton's graduates' first year grade averages and offer information. ACG Norton responded well by tracking the pathways of all but 25 graduates in 2018. However, it is timely for ACG Norton to identify how it can collect information on graduates' academic progress at university.</p>
Conclusion:	Learners are well prepared for university study and achieve well. Almost all graduates receive an offer from AUT. ACG Norton has tracked the destinations of most graduates in 2018, but as it no longer has average grade data, it is not clear how it will continue to track graduates' performance at AUT.

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

Performance:	<b>Good</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Good</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The programme is reviewed annually and reported to AUT. AUT undertakes a five-year review. An example of effective programme review leading to improvement is the English curriculum review. AUT provided input to enhance the curriculum to better prepare learners for university. Changes made were assessed using learner achievement data and feedback.</p> <p>Assessment tasks are varied and prepare learners for final exams. Learners receive a term report on their studentship, core skills and knowledge. Learner interviews are held after final results are released. Learners were unsure about the different timing for assessment results and re-sit opportunities. This information is not in the student handbook. Some learners said it was challenging when other learners did not speak English in class, and they wanted more staff direction about this.</p> <p>AUT moderates all exam papers. AUT identified variance in the level of contact between ACG staff and AUT moderators. An example of moderation showed some variance between assessor and moderator judgements. The moderator said that this has improved over time. The value of these relationships to assessment and programme improvement was clear.</p> <p>AUT has commended the programme's relevance. Improvements have enhanced learner motivation, engagement, skills and preparedness for university. Learner evaluation feedback is used to inform programme review, but at the time of the EER, subsequent feedback on findings or actions had not been provided to learners. ACG Norton advises that it has since implemented a process to provide such feedback to learners.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Self-assessment information is used to enhance the programme and review changes made. Moderation is systematic, but more uniform relationships with AUT staff could be achieved. Information to learners could be improved.</p>

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

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Effective learner support and close tracking of learner progress and wellbeing contributes to strong achievement and needs being met. Each learner has a tutor assigned to them for the duration of their study to support academic, pastoral and pathway matters. Learner support focuses on welfare, discipline and academic progress, and involves learners' parents and agents who receive reports on learner progress. A new initiative is the translation of learner reports into learner's first language. Learners receive a detailed student welfare handbook.</p> <p>ACG Norton closely monitors and responds to learners' needs, including establishing a process to ensure a consistent response to health-related challenges. Access to health and education professionals helps minimise barriers to learning. AUT commends ACG Norton on its pastoral care.</p> <p>The programme is recognised as an Apple Distinguished Programme<sup>4</sup> for the use of Apple technology to transform teaching and learning. Learners said the flipped classrooms contributed to their being more involved with and responsible for their learning, which is self-paced, flexible and interesting.</p> <p>Learner feedback from surveys each term is provided to tutors to inform their reflections on performance. Learner feedback about the support provided is positive.</p>
Conclusion:	Support is effective and relevant to learners' needs. Needs are well identified and responded to by close monitoring of learners' wellbeing and progress. Learners are actively involved and develop into more independent learners. This is encouraged by relevant learning methodologies and technology.

<sup>4</sup> One of 400 programmes from primary school level to tertiary education level worldwide.

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

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Staff are valued and well supported by relevant, quality professional development. Continuous professional development contributes to consistent teaching and understanding of organisational expectations. The annual performance appraisal – tied to key performance indicators – also contributes to this consistency, as does the teacher mentoring programme.</p> <p>AUT has commended ACG Norton’s professional development, and the management team’s availability. Staff value their working environment and said their feedback was sought and used by senior management.</p> <p>Resources are well allocated to support learning and programme quality. Technological investment supports teaching and learning and improved self-assessment. Resourcing and knowledge is shared by ACG Norton being part of the ACG Pathways campus.</p> <p>ACG Norton collaborates with AUT to oversee and improve the quality of programme delivery. The AUT exam board meets quarterly to discuss the programme. The college’s senior management team uses self-assessment information to inform its understanding of educational performance and continues to develop its self-assessment.</p> <p>ACG Norton responds to identified self-assessment needs. For example, it initiated its own follow-up of graduate pathways after losing access to this information from AUT, and developed its student management system to achieve more sophisticated data. These developments will likely lead to a greater depth of information and analysis.</p>
Conclusion:	An effective learning environment, delivery of a quality and well-structured programme, and strong educational achievement are supported by qualified staff who are valued, strong resourcing, effective stakeholder relationships, and purposeful self-assessment.



## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	<b>Good</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Good</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>There are established processes to meet obligations under the Code of Practice, including learner wellbeing and safety and agent management. Reporting to parents and agents is aided by an online portal. Attendance monitoring is robust. A systematic process exists to self-review performance to the Code.</p> <p>The college arranges most insurance for learners. It has an arrangement with its insurer for insurance to commence from the start of the learner's journey. This arrangement was not easily understood from information sighted during the EER visit, but was subsequently confirmed.</p> <p>In line with the 2017 amendment to Rule 18 of the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules, ACG Norton stopped using an ACG English language entry test in July 2017 and uses an external provider for English Language testing.</p> <p>The New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Committee specifies a minimum overall 5.0 IELTS for entry to the one-year programme. The college changed its English entry policy in July 2017 to no longer permit an individual band score below 5.0, but the 2018 prospectus has not been updated. The evaluators' review of 12 learner files demonstrated that as required, learners had a minimum overall 5.0 IELTS result, though two learners gained entry after the July 2017 policy change with instances of an individual band score lower than 5.0.</p> <p>ACG Norton works closely with AUT to make programme changes and amendments.</p>
Conclusion:	Processes are in place to manage key compliance accountabilities. The documentation of compliance processes, changes to (and implementation of) policies, and compliance self-assessment could be enhanced for review purposes.

# Focus Areas

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

## 2.1 Focus area: International Students: Wellbeing and Support

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>

## 2.2 Focus area: Certificate in Foundation Studies (Level 3)

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Good</b>

# 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 ACG Norton College:

- Implement a process to capture information on graduate preparedness and achievement upon progression to university.
- Consider how greater uniformity can be achieved in the level of staff engagement with AUT staff to support moderation and programme review.
- Update learner information about the re-sit policy, changes to entry criteria, and timeframes for different assessment results. Embed the recent process implemented to provide feedback to learners about learner evaluation feedback results, as well as any actions, if appropriate.
- Review whether further guidance is required regarding the use of English in the classroom.
- Review how comprehensively the documentation of key compliance processes is recorded.

# Requirements

There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review.

# Appendix

## 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.*

### *Disclaimer*

*The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>. 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<sup>5</sup>*
- *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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<sup>5</sup> 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 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](http://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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