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External Evaluation and Review Report



Auckland Institute of Studies Limited
trading as Auckland Institute of Studies

Date of report: 4 March 2019

About Auckland Institute of Studies Limited

Auckland Institute of Studies (AIS) offers degree and associated programmes in business administration, information technology, hospitality, and tourism and travel management. AIS also has an English Language Centre.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	28a Linwood Avenue, Mt Albert, Auckland
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 73 (8 per cent); New Zealand Pākehā 1 per cent, New Zealand Māori 1 per cent, Pasifika 2 per cent International: 868 (92 per cent)
Number of staff:	163 (full-time equivalents 120.35) made up of 99 full-time and 64 part-time.
TEO profile:	See: NZQA – Auckland Institute of Studies
Last EER outcome:	The previous EER (external evaluation and review) was held in November 2014 and the results were: Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.
Scope of this evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International student support and wellbeing• English language programmes• Master of Business Administration and associated postgraduate suite of programmes• Bachelor of Information Technology and associated undergraduate suite of programmes
MoE number:	8530
NZQA reference:	C32022
Dates of EER visit:	30 and 31 October and 1 November 2018

Summary of Results

AIS has a comprehensive self-assessment system which is used to inform programme development and the improvement of teaching and delivery. Achievement rates have been improving in the last five years and are now high.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Management is a strong feature at AIS, particularly the clear strategic direction and purpose, which is well understood across the organisation.
- Students and staff are well resourced.
- AIS has a focus on developing real-world skills for the graduates to succeed in the workforce.
- AIS has focussed support systems for students. Students are mentored and can be placed in an individual learning plan for support if needed.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

- A well-developed system of research includes researching teaching and learning practices.
- The provider has strong measures of academic scrutiny which influence programme development.
- There is awareness of the need for flexibility in learning methodology, and several strategic staff changes have helped to focus on this.
- Increased data collection and analysis has enabled improved evaluative practice.
- The results of self-assessment are available to staff throughout the institute to encourage a focus on improvement.
- There are generally good course completion rates across the programmes which average out at 92 per cent.
- AIS has good liaison with industry and effective advisory boards that give strategic and educational guidance.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?	
Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Supporting evidence:	<p>The average rate of course completion is high at 92 per cent across the programmes. In a few cases, the low achievement figures are distorted because they come from very small enrolment numbers.</p> <p>AIS has a comprehensive system in place for early identification of students who struggle. Six-weekly progress summaries are produced to assist in this. An effective mentoring process is put in place to support these students.</p> <p>The large majority (92 per cent from 35 countries) of students are international. Thus, the high achievement rates are predominantly based on this group's performance and are marginally the same or better than those of domestic students.</p> <p>In 2017 there were 33 domestic students who identified as Pasifika, who performed well, with 86 per cent passing on average.</p> <p>There are high rates of student progress (around 90 per cent) to the next level following the six-weekly tests in the English language programmes.</p> <p>The staff understand and analyse the value of trends as well as gaps in performance to inform areas of development and improvement. AIS conducts and analyses student and stakeholder feedback to assist the adjustment of programme structure and delivery and improve the programme completion rates.</p>
Conclusion:	Student achievement at AIS is high. The provider has good systems to monitor the factors that can affect achievement, and provides considerable support to the students.

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 students?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students develop valuable personal skills such as confidence, study skills, critical thinking, group work and research. English language students obtain the IELTS² levels they require to enter study programmes at AIS or elsewhere.</p> <p>AIS obtains good information about the value of the learning from student feedback, graduate and employer evaluations, and from student representation on the advisory council, which inform programme development. The students gain valuable skills and qualifications which lead to employment or further studies. Student uptake of relevant employment is generally strong because they are well prepared by their studies.</p> <p>There is support for Pasifika students, especially those who come from the Pacific Islands for study. AIS has traditional ties to some Pacific Island countries and has pathway arrangements with schools in Tonga. Students learn about the New Zealand way of life and working culture, which helps them to integrate.</p> <p>Study options are designed to suit the students' needs. For example, the dissertation option is useful for those who wish to engage in doctoral studies in the future, and the popular internship option gives students real industry practice.</p> <p>Postgraduate certificates are available to those who qualify and want to withdraw early. This enables most of the learning in those programmes to be recognised with a qualification.</p> <p>AIS has many examples of successful career outcomes for its graduates. Students who study English for Academic Purposes generally achieve higher grade averages in their further studies at AIS than those with direct entry. AIS keeps track of graduate progress for 12 months, providing information that supports the value of the learning.</p> <p>In the business programmes, AIS has affiliation with the Australian Institute of Management and CAANZ³ which helps</p>

² International English Language Testing System

³ Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand

	maintain the standards of tuition and gives weight to the learning outcomes.
Conclusion:	AIS programmes provide much value for the students who succeed in their programmes.

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:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>AIS maintains good industry contacts and advisory committees which give valuable direction and insight to guide programme development and improvements. There is a system of regular programme review by teaching staff.</p> <p>AIS has extensive systems of collecting feedback from employers and current students. Student feedback is acted on to improve programme delivery.</p> <p>AIS has shown flexibility in its delivery approach by offering mixed-method delivery and recently introducing online texts and resources. Programme delivery is scheduled at convenient times to suit the students, in some cases in the weekends. The proposed restructuring of programme components to 15 credit blocks will align with other tertiary providers and should rationalise administration and assessment loads. Recently, the module descriptors have been revised to better reflect the level of learning.</p> <p>With the introduction of Moodle, staff have been trained in this facility as part of professional development. Staff skills are being enhanced to meet the new challenges of flexible learning.</p> <p>AIS is a member of English New Zealand⁴ and meets all its requirements, as shown in the recent English New Zealand audit.</p> <p>The English Language Centre is being used as a resource to assist other faculties of AIS to diversify their teaching methods. Teaching staff collaborate in course planning, assessment and moderation, and programme reviews to exchange ideas and</p>

⁴ English New Zealand is a group of New Zealand English language schools.

	<p>learn from each other.</p> <p>There are external moderation links to universities and polytechnics which help to verify the assessment methodology and results. An intensive system of internal peer pre- and post-moderation ensures consistency and fairness. Every assessment is moderated, and programme components are reviewed on a scheduled basis. The English Language Centre engages in group moderation projects with other providers to ensure consistency and as a form of benchmarking.</p> <p>AIS initiates monitoring of its degree-related programmes. The monitor's reports have been mostly positive. Teachers discuss student progress and provide timely support. Achievement data is analysed, and trends and gaps that prompt future programme and delivery development are identified.</p> <p>The provider would benefit by improving its capacity in furnishing applications of an appropriate standard for the approval of, and changes to degree programmes. The quality of applications to NZQA has been variable in recent years.</p> <p>The quality of teaching at AIS is maintained through student evaluations, the use of class representatives on student-programme forums and the academic board, and management observations and performance reviews.</p> <p>Where appropriate, teaching staff are engaged in individual and collaborative research to inform teaching and learning practice. Staff are valued and listened to, and their views help with the improvement of teaching and strategy. A staff planning day is held each semester to discuss student progress and achievement, programme design changes needed, and to prepare for the next semester.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>AIS has a proactive system of using feedback and analysis from stakeholders and advisory committees to monitor and, if necessary, improve the design and delivery of programmes to match the needs of the learners and employers.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>AIS is responsive to the needs of the communities that it serves and holds regular social functions to which students' families and the community are invited.</p> <p>Course materials are aligned with local situations and conditions to help with the students' understanding of the New Zealand way of life. Varied methods of learning and assessment are used to cater to different learning styles. Practical workplace elements have been introduced to add applied learning to the programmes.</p> <p>Teaching staff are well qualified, some to PhD level, and most of those who teach on degree programmes also do research. Some of the contracted professional staff are not trained in teaching which makes it more difficult to make changes to delivery.</p> <p>Students who find the study difficult are quickly identified and allocated mentors. Their performance is monitored by way of an independent learning plan. The students are predominantly international and so pastoral care issues are foremost in priority.</p> <p>Student feedback influences change and development. Feedback has revealed the need for business administration students to have good numeracy skills. As some students lack this skill, numeracy and accounting support is given in the programmes where necessary.</p> <p>The addition of CISCO (information technology) systems training has been welcomed by staff and students alike and will provide additional learning opportunities, particularly for information technology students.</p> <p>Free wellbeing workshops are run, and individual sessions are available to staff and students, which improves the learning environment. Student survey outcomes are shared with the students so that they can see that actions are being taken.</p> <p>Transport is made available for students who reside on campus to travel to local shops and the supermarket. There is a good</p>

	<p>induction process for students with appropriate checks and safeguards. There is good identification of educational needs and an appropriate and timely response to them.</p> <p>Students are made aware of the rules about plagiarism and the penalties that it will incur. They are also informed of the various learning support agencies that are part of AIS.</p> <p>A comprehensive student handbook provides all the academic and institute rules, and details about other internal and external support services available.</p> <p>There are extensive and frequent student surveys with good response rates which provides valuable data that can be acted on.</p>
Conclusion:	The students are well supported and involved in the learning process. Student feedback is playing a part in programme and delivery development. There are several ways that the student voice is included in the running of the institute.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Strong and enlightened leadership at AIS has been strengthened by recent strategic appointments and decisions since the last EER. Examples include: annual key performance indicators, communication and information sharing, and the academic board's inclusion in strategic decision-making.</p> <p>Teaching staff are well resourced, and facilities are fit for purpose. Teaching staff are supported in their research activities, many of which are required for maintaining PBRF⁵ requirements.</p> <p>The average class size is 12 students, which allows for good interaction and attention to individual student's needs. AIS provides very good initial and ongoing support for international students by support staff with appropriate skills and capabilities.</p> <p>Teaching staff are valued and involved, and their feedback often leads to changes to programmes and delivery. Educational</p>

⁵ Performance-Based Research Fund

	<p>quality is maintained through a network of programme committees, advisory boards, a board of studies and the academic board, by which all results are ratified and checked, programme development is monitored, and educational strategy is planned.</p> <p>Management closely monitors the quality of staff performance. This is done by rating the teaching staff based on student feedback, peer observations and performance reviews. These have recently been reviewed and made more self-reflective.</p> <p>Management places a high priority on professional development including an expectation that all full-time academic staff have, or are working towards, teaching qualifications. Targeted collaborative professional development in the English Language Centre is enhancing learning and teaching resources.</p> <p>There are strong systems for identifying at-risk students and calling on learning support services. There is close monitoring of such occurrences.</p> <p>There is strong support for Pasifika students, but as there are relatively few Māori students the support mechanisms for them are combined with those for Pasifika.</p> <p>APERs (Annual Programme Evaluation Reports) are produced for all degree-level programmes. These involve the reporting of comprehensive achievement and demographic data, which is very useful in identifying trends and gaps and for reporting purposes. A self-review reporting process is being implemented for the English Learning Centre as an APER will not suit.</p> <p>Staff complete an annual staff satisfaction survey. Of note is the publication and circulation of the measurement of semester performance against the key performance indicators for AIS. This bulletin enables a transparent, inclusive and motivating reminder to all staff.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Governance and management is well organised and structured to give comprehensive opportunities to inform decision-making.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>AIS management has a clear understanding of NZQA's programme change approval requirements. Compliance with these processes is integrated into programme review.</p> <p>The programme and course guidelines give realistic indications of how the learning hours will meet the credit value.</p> <p>A sample of student files met the requirements of the Code of Practice.⁶ There is good knowledge among management of the requirements of the Code. The Code self-review report is completed and submitted on time as required.</p> <p>The attendance requirement is 100 per cent unless the student suffers an illness. A systematic warning process is stringently enforced.</p> <p>The requirements of English New Zealand are being met as shown in the 2018 audit outcomes. The self-audit and external audit report indicate strong self-assessment practice. In spite of these, more focus could be given to understanding NZQA commitments and the requirements of the Code among the teaching and administration staff.</p> <p>Immigration requirements are understood in terms of meeting entry requirements and having the correct visa. There are comprehensive, systematic checks of homestays. The student experience is evaluated through the collection of feedback, and there are police checks for all homestay hosts.</p> <p>The academic registrar effectively controls the overall management of compliance.</p>
Conclusion:	AIS has good management processes to effectively oversee compliance matters and delegate specific responsibilities.

⁶ The Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: International student support and wellbeing

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

2.2 Focus area: English language programmes

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good

2.3 Focus area: MBA and associated postgraduate suite of programmes

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

2.4 Focus area: Bachelor of Information Technology and associated undergraduate suite of programmes

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

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 Auckland Institute of Studies Limited trading as Auckland Institute of Studies:

1. Raise the profile of Māori student support networks (as needed), distinct from Pacific Island students to ensure that the cultural needs of these groups are recognised.
2. Focus on strengthening self-review and analysis of progress outcomes for English language students and graduate performance in further study for English for Academic Purposes students.
3. Improve the capacity to supply good quality applications for programme (including degrees) approvals and changes to programmes.

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

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-eeer/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-eeer/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 fraud⁷*
- *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.*

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

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

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

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

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013. The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

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

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

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz