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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Dominion Teaching Associates Limited
trading as Dominion English Schools

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 2 March 2018

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Final Report

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 of TEO:	Dominion Teaching Associates Limited trading as Dominion English Schools
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1 April 1991
Location:	Levels 8 and 9, 155 Queen Street, Auckland City
Delivery sites:	One, as above
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General English (levels 1-4)• IELTS¹ Examination Preparation• Cambridge Examination Preparation• Dominion TESOL – Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages• Dominion TECSOL – Teaching English to Child Speakers of Other Languages• Japanese Primary English Teaching Certification (J-Shine)• English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (from 2018)
Code of Practice	Yes

¹ International English Language Testing System

signatory:	
Number of students:	International students only, varying between 100 and 250 students at any time
Number of staff:	Currently 22 full-time
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General English (levels 1-4) • Examination Preparation • TESOL, TECSOL, J-Shine, EAP • English Plus courses • Volunteer Work Programme
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Dominion English Schools provides General English courses for students aged 12 and above. Junior students are taught separately with courses tailored to their needs and interests. Dominion English Schools also teaches examination preparation for internationally recognised English proficiency tests. Dominion English Schools teaches TESOL and TECSOL for English as a second language students wishing to gain skills and practice in English language teaching.</p> <p>Up to 35 nationalities are enrolled at Dominion English Schools each year.</p> <p>Dominion English Schools is a founding member of English New Zealand.</p>
Recent significant changes:	New principal/general manager from December 2016
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>Dominion English Schools is a member of English New Zealand, which represents 27 English language schools throughout New Zealand. English New Zealand performed a random Spot Audit (February 2017) at Dominion English Schools, which was found to be fully compliant with English New Zealand standards.</p> <p>English New Zealand Full Audit (4 July 2017) – Dominion English Schools was judged ‘to standard’ with two commendations.</p> <p>The previous NZQA external evaluation and review</p>

(EER) was held in 2013 – NZQA was Highly Confident in Dominion English Schools' educational performance and Highly Confident in its capability in self-assessment. The EER report contained the following recommendation:

- 'NZQA recommends that Dominion English Schools consider aggregating and formally analysing the data already collected from the IELTS and Cambridge exam preparation courses offered, and strengthen the homestay feedback mechanisms, with the view that this information may further inform Dominion English Schools about the educational performance of the school.'

NZQA has not noted any risk issues since the last EER. Dominion English Schools has met all NZQA moderation requirements.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Three focus areas were included in this evaluation:

International students: support and wellbeing

NZQA introduced a standard focus area for all EERs of tertiary organisations that enrol international students. This focus area examines how effectively the organisation under review is discharging its pastoral care responsibilities towards its international students.

General English

This is Dominion English Schools' largest programme area which enrolls the majority of international students. This is also the base course from which some students choose to pathway to the academic or TESOL courses Dominion English Schools offers.

IELTS

This is a shorter programme, with a different focus to the General English programme, with differing outcomes.

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 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.*

During the EER visit the evaluation team was provided with a range of operational and self-review documentation, including two folders of self-review material relating to the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice, and the review of quality provision at Dominion English Schools. Feedback from students and collated analysis of student satisfaction levels were also viewed. The evaluators reviewed all materials tabled and were able to review a sufficient range of evidence to reach evaluative judgements.

The lead evaluator spoke to the principal of Dominion English Schools prior to the EER to agree the scope and process for the EER. An evaluation team of two evaluators spent two days at the site where they reviewed an extensive range of documentation and met with the management team, administration and student support staff, and tutors of both teaching focus areas. The lead evaluator spoke to the owner directly via phone link to Australia. The evaluators also spoke to representatives of client and stakeholder organisations. The evaluation team met with students from both General English and IELTS and viewed a random selection of eight student files.

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 fraud²*
- *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.

² 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.

Summary of Results

Statements of confidence on educational performance and capability in self assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Dominion Teaching Associates Limited trading as Dominion English Schools**.

All students at Dominion English Schools achieve excellent results and there is good evidence of valued outcomes where useful and meaningful skills and knowledge are gained. The overall experience for students at Dominion English Schools is highly valued by students, retailers³ and the local community including pathway providers and employers.

Dominion English Schools is effectively meeting the most important needs of all learners, which are to improve English language skills and enable students to progress to pathway programmes. Other needs are being met around developing knowledge and friendships with learners from other cultures and learning around New Zealand culture.

Dominion English Schools has had a change in management leadership in the last 18 months and has recently clarified the roles and responsibilities of key managers to support the sustainability of the organisation. An effective outcome from the change in leadership has been the review of all systems and processes which was prompted from the annual review of the Code of Practice. The review resulted in wide-ranging improvements to student and staff support and wellbeing, understanding around entry and progress, meeting needs, achievement, added value, effective support and consequent outcomes.

The school employs a high number of teaching staff who have worked in the organisation for a long time. Staff clearly enjoy the environment, work hard, are rewarded well and feel valued. In the coming months, the organisational strategy is to remain aligned to the values and mission of the organisation while becoming more clearly defined and transparent to students and stakeholders.

Key indicators of high quality at Dominion English Schools are students who extend their study longer than initially intended, recommendations from past students, students who return for further study, no first-week withdrawals and no formal complaints in the history of the school. Students attested to receiving useful feedback on their assessments, supporting them to know and understand the skills and knowledge they needed to focus on next.

³ 'Retailers' is the term used by Dominion English Schools for New Zealand and overseas-based agents and agencies.

The evaluation team saw evidence that Code of Practice reviews and robust internal audits against English New Zealand standards are occurring regularly. The key self-assessment tool for the organisation is the comprehensive and systematic review of the Code of Practice. Thorough, well-thought-out self-assessment processes as a result of the Code of Practice review by the new principal and the director of studies and relevant staff have been robust and have significantly lifted the overall quality of Dominion English Schools.

Examples of changes brought about as a result of robust self-assessment activities, where the outcomes are used to identify areas for improvement and inform priority development areas and allocation of resources, include:

- a change to online student evaluation surveys as a result of comments from staff led to gaining useful and relevant feedback on teaching and resourcing
- immediate response to maintenance issues as a result of student feedback
- inclusion of a risk-assessment section on the school excursion consent form as a result of a suggestion from the English New Zealand audit
- integration of technology into teaching in response to student feedback requesting more variety in classes
- a General English Book Bond system so that students have their own course book to use in class and at home; this was set up in response to student feedback
- performance descriptors which are benchmarked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) displayed in all classrooms; the reporting of learner progress is expressed in terms of these descriptors to help students be aware of their progress and to decide future goals
- teaching staff regularly move to teach across differing levels at different times to ensure the students receive interesting, informed and effective language learning
- as a result of the establishment of a relationship with an activity provider specialising in Māori cultural activities, students are gaining insight into Māori culture and have learned to perform a haka.

Management has a strong understanding of the relevant and important quality and compliance requirements that inform their processes.

In summary, Dominion English Schools has effective and current processes and practices in place to ensure the delivery of quality English language programmes and effective ongoing support to students. These results are evident in staff who are motivated and feel valued, and students who are highly satisfied with their learning and the ability to meet their goals. As a result of effective and ongoing self-assessment, issues are clearly identified and addressed. Therefore, NZQA is

highly confident in Dominion English Schools' educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

Findings⁴

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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

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

As a result of careful planning and implementation of the curriculum and assessment, students at Dominion English Schools achieve excellent results in both General English and IELTS.

General English has weekly formative tests and progress and achievement tests at week five which motivate students in their learning. Progress and achievement tests are aligned with the course books and levels, which in turn are modelled on the CEFR, giving students the ability to gain acceptance into pathway programmes or employment.

Students can see their progress, and feedback is given one-to-one on their progress leading to updates on their goals. Dominion English Schools collects evidence of positive outcomes and uses the considerable formal and informal feedback from students to identify new and improved teaching and learning strategies.

Student performance data is readily accessible and regularly analysed, and information gained from performance is used to inform improvements to teaching practice and course delivery. Dominion English Schools is not yet using this information to analyse the achievement of students who go on to further study. However, as a result of one of the outcomes from the Code of Practice review, the school is developing a graduate survey to collect this data going forward.

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

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

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

The overall experience provided to students at Dominion English Schools is highly valued by students, retailers and the local community including educational pathway providers and employers. Feedback from two key stakeholders (the Saudi Arabian

⁴ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

Cultural Mission and one Auckland-based agent) was positive. Both stated that Dominion English Schools was one of the top-rated schools for placing their clients.

There is value for the students in the programmes available to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners. Students' goals are discussed at the beginning of their time at Dominion English Schools and reviewed regularly. The evaluation team notes that useful information was being sporadically collected from educational pathway partners and the learners who progress to further study. Staff know the immediate destination of every graduate and confirmed that their goals were being met. Graduates are encouraged to keep in touch with the organisation via email and Facebook which, along with exit interviews, provides anecdotal information about the positive way in which the programmes have contributed to their lives.

Most students taking the General English programme want to improve their English for travel, friendship and cultural exchange purposes, and sometimes as interpreters for their family's travels, and this meets the students' and stakeholders' needs well. Anecdotal qualitative evidence from those students who took the IELTS classes indicates that many found the skills they learned valuable for further study. Further evidence of value exists in qualitative data which shows that IELTS graduates are successfully using the knowledge and skills they gained to study in higher education in New Zealand and overseas.

A number of students work part-time and the school supports these students through a 'Job Seekers' Club' which provides information and support on work issues in New Zealand. Access to a wide range of learning resources was noted by students as adding value to their knowledge base along with the staff being available to support appropriate access. Other needs are being met around developing knowledge and friendships with learners from other cultures and learning about New Zealand culture.

Although staff know that graduates move into higher-level study through the exit interview process, they have only anecdotal information about how well these students achieve at higher levels as a result of the preparation at Dominion English Schools. A greater effort to collect and analyse achievement data would provide useful information for future students' programmes of study and support, and formally demonstrate the long-term benefits the courses provide to all graduates. The school is about to implement a graduate survey to formalise data collection for this.

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

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

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

The school offers General English and IELTS at a range of levels which allows placement of students into classes which match their needs. Students were able to describe this and were appreciative of the value and appropriateness of it aligning to their requirements. For example, in response to student feedback a General English Book Bond system was set up so that students could have their own course book to use in class and at home.

The English language curriculum at Dominion English Schools is described through comprehensive course descriptors which express learning outcomes aligned to the CEFR. Course materials are adapted from mainstream commercial texts which link to the CEFR, and both formative and summative assessments also align to the framework. The school has developed performance descriptors which are benchmarked to the CEFR and are displayed in all classrooms. Reporting of student progress is expressed in terms of these descriptors. In summary, all curriculum, learning, assessment and reporting procedures reflect best practice and the principles of Constructive Alignment (Biggs, 2003).⁵

The school reviews all academic areas on a three-yearly cycle, the current focus being the IELTS preparation courses. One change resulting from this review cycle has been a re-alignment of the General English levels to the CEFR as a result of analysis of students' IELTS results. The evaluators noted the self-assessment process for new IELTS students as an example of good practice for managing learner expectations and goal-setting.

Assessment design and assessment results are regularly moderated through a process of double-marking and benchmarking against band scores from international tests. This ensures the level and rigour of the testing is at the correct international level and content.

As a result of feedback from students, Monday Clubs were instituted to supplement areas of language study and activities and provide opportunities for student interaction to facilitate language practice. In response to the 2017 English New

⁵ Biggs, J (2003): *Aligning Teaching and Assessment to Curriculum Objectives*, (Imaginative Curriculum Project, LTSN Generic Centre)

Zealand audit, the student handbook was updated and edited to make it more user-friendly.

All staff are well qualified and experienced and have a good understanding of learner needs by way of placement test results, first week and week 10 surveys, one-to-one meetings, and many ways of gathering learner feedback. This all helps to match the needs of learners. Evidence that these systems are working is shown in the progress with language acquisition and learner satisfaction with their progress.

Staff are well supported through a comprehensive professional development programme which covers topics agreed with management, suggested by staff and student feedback. One current focus is integration of technology into teaching. In response to some student feedback requesting more variety in classes, a professional development session on using technology in the classroom is given along with teacher support material.

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

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

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

The organisation has thoroughly self-reviewed its compliance with the Code of Practice and provides a safe and supportive learning environment for its students. The PTE is in close contact with students outside of the normal hours of tuition. There is a designated support staff member with 24-hour phone contact should the students require assistance when away from the site.

The homestay co-ordinator visits all current homestay providers on a regular cycle to inspect and evaluate their suitability, and visits every new homestay provider prior to their initial student placement. Those providing accommodation for under 18-year-old students are visited every three months to check arrangements are suitable.

With the change in principal/general manager and his objective to become well acquainted with the organisation using a review approach, a review of processes around attendance was conducted. A thorough Absent Student Process was put in place to ensure that student welfare and safety is being attended to at all times. This has contributed to higher attendance and clearer knowledge around student wellbeing.

As a result of reflection around the longevity of teaching staff and the risk of burn-out, staff have worked to keep themselves and their practice motivated to ensure they stay current. They do so by all choosing to work across all levels which

addresses the needs of the organisation and ensures the students receive interesting, informed and effective language teaching.

Teachers collaborate and support each other. Almost all are qualified to graduate and/or postgraduate level, all hold initial TESOL qualifications and many hold higher TESOL qualifications. Some also have additional teaching qualifications. Staff appraisals are undertaken thoroughly and are outcomes-focused. One staff member cited an example of how she was supported to improve her practice through this system, and as a result changed her delivery style.

Student evaluations are undertaken regularly and staff and students cited examples of changes made as a result of student feedback. If there are issues noted regarding the teaching and learning, spot-check evaluations are undertaken to ensure quick coverage of the problem. Anything serious is dealt with quickly and is given special attention. Students were able to cite an example where a student was moved to a different class as a result of such an investigation.

Student surveys are conducted in the first week of enrolment, during study and at exit, and show a high level of satisfaction with the support provided and the students' overall experience. Most of the student support staff have been at Dominion English Schools for only a short time, and as a result management has spent considerable time and money ensuring these staff are familiar with their responsibilities with respect to Code of Practice requirements.

Formative and summative tests are undertaken with the IELTS classes. These provide students with evidence of their progress, and further evidence is provided post-hoc as students report back their IELTS results which are used to inform improvements to teaching practice and course delivery.

Dominion English Schools accepts international students under the age of 18 years. Both administration and teaching staff are fully aware of their Code of Practice obligations for these students and ensure they are meeting them. Students receive sound pre-enrolment guidance, and a comprehensive orientation programme was available to them in their first week of study. Staff of different nationalities speaking various languages are available to support students.

The implementation of the Code of Practice in the school has undergone an internal review with various improvements to reflect recent changes to the Code. Administration staff spoken to by the evaluation team were aware of the requirements and obligations with respect to entry, enrolments, visas, insurance, police checks, homestays and under-18s.

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

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

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

Dominion English Schools has had a change in management leadership in the last 18 months. Over that time the PTE has clarified the roles and responsibilities of key managers to support the sustainability of the organisation. An effective outcome from the change in leadership has been the review of all systems and processes and the use of feedback loops prompted by the annual review of the Code of Practice. Along with this, a more comprehensive internal audit was instituted based on English New Zealand standards.

Random samples of eight student files selected and checked during this EER confirmed that the requirements were being met. This was also noted during the English New Zealand audit.

The organisation has, over time, employed, developed and retained a very competent, well-qualified and dedicated group of staff and management who have a thorough understanding of English New Zealand employment requirements.

Staff are clearly content working at Dominion English Schools and reported feeling valued and supported to develop as teachers and contribute to the school's goals for teaching and learning. The staff are well supported and are rewarded well by the organisation in their professional development, with a coherent professional development programme that addresses the needs of the organisation. Systematically collected student feedback, peer observations and self-assessments all inform annual performance reviews where staff have the opportunity to review and set goals.

The evaluation team observed coherence across all staff in their focus on giving students the best experience possible to equip them to perform and achieve. Students noted some understanding of New Zealand's bicultural society (and the learning of a haka) as a result of the establishment of a relationship with an activity provider specialising in Māori cultural activities. In response to student feedback, extra classes that focus more specifically on grammar and vocabulary have been introduced. These examples reflect an organisation that is responsive to the changing cohorts and needs of students.

Resources are good and are updated regularly. The physical and learning resources are sufficient for the current number of students and are modern, effective and fit for purpose. Evidence of this was a new computer suite having recently been added.

Staff have a code of conduct which is posted on noticeboards and in the staff handbook. To strengthen this, the evaluators noted that further documented strategic planning could be developed and shared with staff to ensure the vision and mission of the organisation is stated and heard. The organisational strategy could also be more aligned to the values and mission of the organisation and more clearly defined and transparent to students and stakeholders.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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

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

The management of compliance is effective, with relevant staff having a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and well supported by management. NZQA attestations and returns have been met within required timeframes. The courses are being delivered consistent with NZQA approvals. The evaluation team saw evidence that robust internal audits against English New Zealand standards and the Code of Practice reviews are a regular occurrence.

As confirmed in the English New Zealand report, the school has appropriately qualified academic managers and teaching staff. All staff are either employed or contracted and stringent recruitment procedures and conditions are followed.

In response to the 2017 English New Zealand audit, class excursion request forms have been updated with a risk analysis and management system – ensuring teaching staff use the reporting form more efficiently to minimise the possibility of incidents/accidents occurring.

Dominion English Schools has sound processes to ensure it complies with the Code of Practice.

Visa monitoring is well managed and supported through new database alerts as a result of the Code of Practice review this year. The complaints process is noted in the quality management system and is visible around the campus. Student interviews confirmed that they were aware of this facility, and management said there had been no formal complaints over the last four years.

Quality assurance processes are prompted by the quality management system and are reviewed regularly. Dominion English Schools has a detailed risk management list which could be extended to define levels of risk and outline those responsible for managing it.

The administration of entry and enrolment and the scrutiny of agents is rigorous, with more stringent approval and monitoring processes being applied as required

by Immigration New Zealand and NZQA. Monitoring of agent contracts is sound and contracts have been updated. Attendance expectations relating to programme success and visa rules are very actively managed. Warnings and sanctions are fairly applied when student attendance drops.

A recent Public Trust audit of fee protection found Dominion English Schools is fully compliant with requirements.

Dominion English Schools has a clear understanding of its compliance accountabilities and manages these effectively and proactively to ensure internal and external obligations are met.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: International Students: Support and Wellbeing

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

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

2.2 Focus area: General English

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

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

2.3 Focus area: IELTS

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Dominion Teaching Associates Limited:

- Continue aggregating and analysing the data already collected to formally analyse the achievement of students who pathway to further study, to gather further data about the performance of the school.

Appendix

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/>.

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