

Report of External Evaluation and Review

The Cut Above Academy Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 19 April 2016

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Purpose of this Report

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

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	The Cut Above Academy Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	1 February 1993
Location:	Level 6, 242 Queen Street, Auckland
Delivery sites:	Manukau (South Campus); salon at Unitec, Mt Albert
Courses currently delivered:	Certificate in Barbering (Level 3), Certificate in Hairdressing (Level 3), Certificate in Hairdressing (Level 4), Certificate in Fashion Makeup (Level 3), Certificate in Makeup Artistry (Level 4), Diploma in Production Design and Sculpting (Level 5), National Certificate in Beauty Services (Nail Technology) (Level 4), National Certificate in Beauty Services (Beautician) (Level 4), National Certificate in Beauty Services (Electrology) (Level 5), National Certificate in Beauty Services (Body Therapy) (Level 5)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 429; European, 42 per cent; Māori, 35 per cent; Pasifika, 24 per cent; Asian, 13 per cent; Other, 9 per cent International: seven in 2014; three in 2015
Number of staff:	40.25 full-time equivalents (40 full-time, one part-time)

Scope of active accreditation:	http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=894410001
Distinctive characteristics:	Vocational training, mostly face-to-face learning with work experience built into the programmes through the academy's on-site salons and beauty clinic. The PTE has diversified its delivery to include Barbering, Makeup Artistry, Special Effects, Beauty Therapy and Nail Technology. The academy has been actively involved in the Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy Targeted Review of Qualifications. The hairdressing sector is one of the areas where there is the highest duplication of courses. Cut Above Academy is one of the 20 largest PTEs in New Zealand.
Recent significant changes:	<p>In March 2013, the academy was purchased (shareholding) by Intueri Education Group Limited (IEG), which at the time was owned by Arowana International Limited, an Australian-based listed holding company. IEG, which provides industry-relevant training across a number of industries, was subsequently listed on both the New Zealand and Australian stock exchanges in May 2014. The current executive structure of IEG was formed in July 2014.</p> <p>The academy operates as an individual PTE with significant autonomy within the support framework of IEG. IEG contributes to the governance and strategy and provides support in the areas of academic development and quality assurance, human resources, marketing including international recruitment, finance, student administration and IT.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	At its most recent external evaluation and review (EER), in 2011, Cut Above Academy was found to be Highly Confident in educational performance and Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment. At the last Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) audit in 2013, the academy was required to make some policy and procedural changes which have since been actioned. NZQA has recently approved a number of Category 1 programme changes. Moderation by NZQA and the Hairdressing Industry Training Organisation

(HITO) shows that the academy's assessments met the required standard.

Other:

IEG currently owns 10 schools in New Zealand: Cut Above Academy, Academy Group (New Zealand), Design and Arts College, New Zealand School of Commercial Diver Training, Elite International School of Beauty and Spa Therapies, Information Technology Training Institute, NSIA (North Shore International Academy, a hospitality school), and Quantum Education Group (with three separate PTEs).

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected were the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy, and two programmes. The programmes were the Certificate in Hairdressing (Level 3) and the Certificate in Makeup Artistry (Level 4). The hairdressing certificate programme was selected as it has the greatest number of learners. The makeup artistry programme was selected as it is a new programme which has been experiencing growth. A pre-scoping meeting was held prior to the EER to meet the Cut Above Academy director and the IEG general manager-organisational capability to review and confirm the focus areas, the draft agenda and the conduct of the EER.

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.

A team of two evaluators visited the Queen Street site over two days. They met face-to-face with the IEG general manager-organisational capability, the IEG academic and quality assurance support director, the IEG academy director, the recruitment manager, the education manager, nine tutors from the Certificate in Hairdressing programme, six tutors from the Certificate in Makeup Artistry, 10 Certificate in Hairdressing students from Queen Street and South Campus, and six students from the Certificate in Makeup Artistry. They also spoke with six members of the advisory committees covering the range of provision at the academy – employers from hairdressing, makeup, barbering, special effects and production. After the EER, the lead evaluator spoke to six graduates from each of the

programmes and a further three stakeholders who were unable to be at the face-to-face meeting.

The evaluation team reviewed a range of documentation, including annual, strategic and investment plans (for Cut Above Academy, the TEC and IEG), programme review documents, minutes of a range of meetings, a range of educational performance data for Student Achievement Component-funded qualifications and Youth Guarantee programmes, Māori and Pasifika, benchmarking data across similar providers, credit reporting systems, student evaluations, the self-assessment calendar, recruitment process documents, the quality management system, work experience feedback sheets, employer feedback from community events, and moderation results. The documentation sighted was comprehensive, evaluative and outcomes-oriented. It showed the processes and practices across the academy, including how the academy operates with significant autonomy within IEG. The documentation sighted also showed how IEG contributes to the governance, academic quality, strategic direction, human resource development and international marketing and the benefits this has provided for the academy.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **The Cut Above Academy Limited**.

- Educational performance is benchmarked against providers with the same or similar provision, and also within the IEG group by course completion, qualification completion, retention and progression, for both Student Achievement Component-funded qualifications and Youth Guarantee programmes, and for Māori and Pasifika learners. These comparisons indicate that the academy is performing as well as or better than other similar PTEs.
- Overall course and qualification completion rates over the years 2010-2014 have mostly been (apart from 2014) above the sub-sector medians, including parity of achievement for Māori and Pasifika learners (who comprise over 50 per cent of all learners), and learners under 25 years of age, indicating that the academy is meeting government targets for all learners well, including priority groups (refer Findings 1.1).
- A credit tracking system ensures achievement is tracked weekly at department and programme levels and by the learners themselves. It has led to consistent improvements in the rate of course completions, which is the most accurate measure of learner achievement (refer Findings 1.1).
- Work experience is provided by the hairdressing and beauty salons on site which are open to the public, and by participation at community events. While learners rate these experiences highly, some employers believed that more time in commercial workplaces would provide a more realistic experience for learners and reduce employer time spent on upskilling new employees (refer Findings 1.1 and Recommendation 1). This needs to be balanced with the contrary employer view also heard that the salons provide good practice and preparation for subsequent employment.
- Many learners have low entry qualifications. All level 3 and 4 learners' literacy and numeracy needs are assessed. This contributes to the learner profile available to the learner's tutor and informs teaching and learning. The majority of tutors hold the National Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy, assisting them to integrate appropriate literacy and numeracy strategies into lesson delivery and assessment (refer Findings 1.3 and 1.4).
- The academy is exceeding the TEC benchmark of nearly 20 per cent in literacy and numeracy gains. For example, in the Certificate in Makeup Artistry (Level 4), of the 96 students enrolled, 87 completed the literacy and numeracy assessment. Of these, 29 per cent were assessed at level 5 or above, and 30

per cent of the remaining 71 students were assessed as achieving a gain in numeracy skills, of whom 21 per cent were Māori and Pasifika.

- Goals are set and reviewed through regular tutor and learner discussions, and adjusted when required. Both tutors and learners reported that this was an effective way to review academic progress and address any barriers to learning (refer Findings 1.3).
- An annual moderation plan ensures internal and external moderation is undertaken systematically. Moderation is reported on monthly. Consistency in assessment is supported by cross-campus moderation between the academy and Elite, a school with similar provision that is also under the IEG governance umbrella (refer Findings 1.4).
- Staff appraisals are conducted regularly. They focus on achievements, disappointments and areas for development, and follow the leadership and management practices used across all IEG campuses. All staff have a professional development plan (refer Findings 1.4).
- Comprehensive learner recruitment procedures, effective learner induction, and staff who relate well to learners assist with culturally appropriate, ongoing support for learners. There is also a full-time student welfare/industry liaison officer who is responsible for pastoral care (refer Findings 1.5).
- IEG adds value to the academy through the experienced governance and executive team and improved systems for academic development and quality assurance, marketing and recruitment, human resources, finance, student administration and IT (refer Findings 1.6).

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **The Cut Above Academy Limited**.

- IEG has provided the academy with a more systematic, coherent governance and management framework which has led to clearer processes and procedures that are transparent and robust. This framework has led to worthwhile improvements for staff, such as the addition of the human resources department, which has strengthened processes for recruiting staff and conducting performance reviews, and has assisted with staff professional development plans and provided performance management training for key managers.
- The governance and management framework is supported by the organisation's leadership and management methodology which includes daily meetings that encourage open communication and allow staff to be involved in annual planning and strategic goal-setting. For example, the one-page strategic plan that is mapped out with the academy director and IEG executive management team includes input from all areas of the academy.

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- Learner achievement is monitored by a range of criteria: assessment results, course and qualification completions, student evaluations, TEC educational performance criteria, attendance, credit tracking reports, student goal-setting sheets, and literacy and numeracy analysis by qualification. This regular, systematic analysis ensures that learners who are under-performing are identified quickly and plans put in place to address the issue.
- Learner guidance and support begins when an inquiry is made. The recruitment team ensures learners are well informed about costs and the commitment they are making prior to enrolment. This has a positive impact on retention.
- A self-assessment calendar of events for each year identifies key events and the people and departments responsible for data-gathering, analysis and planning. This allows for forward planning and a proactive approach to upcoming self-assessment activities.
- Involvement in the Targeted Review of Qualifications for hairdressing and beauty therapy, at both working group and governance levels, has informed current programme development and alignment to industry needs.
- There are three advisory groups: hairdressing and barbering, beauty therapy and nail technology, and makeup and special effects. Some external stakeholders who spoke with the evaluation team noted that since the IEG purchase they were unsure who to contact to arrange work experience and that the academy had become less personalised in its approach. This concern was relayed to the academy during the on-site visit and there is a recommendation in this report relating to this issue. It was noted by the academy management that all but one of the key staff involved in sector engagement and contact had not changed, and nor had the procedures relating to engagement and contact.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners 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**.

Overall course and qualification completion rates over the years 2010-2014 have all been above the sub-sector medians, except for 2014 when they were slightly below the course and qualification sub-sector medians. However, the variance is small and the evaluation team is confident that these results will be further analysed as part of the regular analysis of learner achievement.

Table 1. Learner achievement, 2010-2014 (TEC sub-sector medians in brackets)

All learners	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Course completions	86% (81%)	87% (86%)	87% (85%)	88% (85%)	84% (85%)
Qualification completions	85% (75%)	91% (80%)	88% (84%)	100%* (80%)	79% (81%)
Progression	32% (22%)	40% (23%)	39% (24%)	27% (23%)	30% (22%)
Retention	70% (69%)	79% (75%)	80% (66%)	84% (77%)	85% (75%)

*In 2013 the National Certificate in Salon Support, embedded in the Certificate in Hairdressing (Level 3), was reported on, hence some learners received two qualifications, inflating the qualification completion rate to 100 per cent.

A credit tracking system (showing learner credits achieved each week) is checked weekly, and responsibility for this is shared between the student and the tutor. The head of department monitors achievement at programme level. The education manager monitors achievement at programme and organisation levels. Progress is discussed at weekly management meetings and processes are put in place to assist learners falling behind. This system has contributed to consistency in course completions from 2010-2014 (refer Table 1).

Table 2. Māori learner achievement, 2010-2013 (TEC Māori sub-sector medians in brackets)

Māori all levels	2010	2011	2012	2013
Course completions	78% (69%)	85% (75%)	77% (76%)	85% (79%)
Qualification completions	75% (61%)	94% (66%)	80 (74%)	96% (76%)
Progression	26% (29%)	42% (26%)	36% (26%)	27% (24%)
Retention	58% (51%)	70% (56%)	77% (59%)	78% (61%)

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

Table 3. Pasifika learner achievement, 2010-2013 (TEC Pasifika sub-sector medians in brackets)

Pasifika all levels	2010	2011	2012	2013
Course completions	83% (74%)	86% (80%)	83% (79%)	84% (79%)
Qualification completions	82% (69%)	93% (74%)	85% (75%)	100% (78%)
Progression	36% (30%)	47% (30%)	37% (30%)	25% (31%)
Retention	67% (62%)	76% (66%)	76% (70%)	81% (65%)

Table 4. Under-25 learner achievement, 2010-2013 (TEC Under-25 sub-sector medians in brackets)

Under-25 all levels	2010	2011	2012	2013
Course completions	84% (79%)	87% (83%)	86% (84%)	87% (83%)
Qualification completions	85% (72%)	95% (78%)	89% (80%)	99% (78%)
Progression	30% (30%)	37% (28%)	34% (29%)	24% (30%)
Retention	68% (65%)	77% (69%)	79% (73%)	84% (73%)

Achievement for Māori and Pasifika students (who collectively comprise over 50 per cent of all learners) and for learners under 25 years of age is on a par with or above the respective sub-sector medians, indicating that the academy is meeting government targets for these priority groups (refer to Tables 2, 3 and 4).

The academy is exceeding the TEC benchmark of nearly 20 per cent in literacy and numeracy gains. For example, in the Certificate in Makeup Artistry (Level 4), of the 96 students enrolled, 87 completed the literacy and numeracy assessment. Of those, 29 per cent were assessed at level 5 or above, and 30 per cent of the remaining 71 students were assessed as achieving a gain in numeracy skills, of whom 21 per cent were Māori and Pasifika.

Educational performance is benchmarked against providers with the same or similar provision, and also within the IEG group by course completion, qualification completion, retention and progression, for both Student Achievement Component-funded qualifications and Youth Guarantee programmes, and for Māori and Pasifika learners. These comparisons indicate that the academy is performing as well as or better than other similar PTEs.

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

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

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

Learners complete courses and gain qualifications which can be used in their chosen careers. They are able to work with the public in the salons and beauty clinic on site at the academy. This provides hands-on customer service skills which can be useful for work experience outside the academy. Most graduates are well-prepared for the workplace. However, while all the hairdressing learners and graduates contacted rated the teaching and learning experience highly, and that they had not found it difficult to get work, there were several graduates of the Certificate in Makeup Artistry whose experience was less favourable. Issues raised were the difficulties of freelance work which was irregular and poorly paid, and that there was a lot of competition for this work. They also said that there was an expectation in some situations that they would work for free to prove themselves, on the understanding that paid employment might follow. In many cases, the paid work did not follow.

While these learners are a small sample, it needs to be noted that there was a perception from them that the academy had overstated the demand for makeup work and that without a hairdressing qualification they were not given priority when seeking employment. The academy does provide hairdressing classes once a week to the Certificate in Makeup Artistry students, but this was insufficient for them to feel confident. Graduates were also in direct competition with students from training organisations who were on work experience and offered their services for free. This perception was confirmed by several Certificate in Makeup Artistry students who had experienced these issues and had decided to return to study hairdressing to make themselves more employable.

The majority of learners believed that the teaching and learning they received was valuable and had contributed to their success in the workplace. The academy contacts graduates within three months of completing their programme of study and also uses Facebook to track graduate destinations. These results are reported monthly to the IEG board. The most recent data reported by the academy for makeup special effects and beauty qualifications showed that 81 per cent of the students contacted had either progressed to another qualification or were now in employment, 3 per cent had not progressed for personal reasons, 14 per cent were working in an unrelated field, and 29 per cent had not been able to be contacted or had not responded. The results for hairdressing were more favourable – 90 per cent of the students contacted had either progressed to another qualification or were now in employment, 6 per cent had not progressed for personal reasons, 7 per cent were working in an unrelated field, and 37 per cent had not been able to be contacted or had not responded.

The academy has recently introduced (June 2015) a system for gathering graduate feedback on the knowledge and vocational skills, practical skills and personal and professional skills needed to gain and succeed in employment. This might provide further insight into the issues experienced by some makeup artistry graduates.

The academy has an 'off-job training' contract with HITO. Hairdressing apprentices attend on average 19 days a year of intensive training and assessment by the academy tutors to complete their national certificate. This demonstrates the academy's currency, the relevance of the tutors' skills and training, and the close relationship with industry as these students are all employed by the salons.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

Cut Above Academy has three advisory committees that meet formally once a year, while individuals meet more often informally. Involvement in the Targeted Review of Qualifications for hairdressing (including barbering) and beauty therapy (including makeup, special effects and nail technology) by academy staff, at both working group and governance levels, has informed current programme development and alignment to industry needs. Programmes are reviewed on an ongoing basis, through fortnightly programme committee meetings or heads of department meetings. Issues are identified and appropriate action taken. For example, due to market demand in men's grooming, facials for men were added to the Certificate in Barbering.

All learners complete evaluations in the first four weeks and last four weeks of a programme. Information from these is sent to the tutor team and management and any areas of concern are identified and actioned. These evaluations also inform programme review. The academy is also proactive when industry needs are identified, for example programme development around digital sculpting (the use of software that can use tools to push, pull, smooth, grab, pinch or otherwise manipulate a digital object as if it were made of a real-life substance such as clay) as a result of changes in technology and the effects these will have on industry. The academy also offers a range of further study opportunities for learners who wish to pathway to a higher level of study and acquire further skills to enhance their employment options. This might include enrolling at one of IEG's other schools, such as the Design and Arts School.

Learner programmes and activities are well matched. The academy has extensive community involvement with a wide variety of organisations. Learners offer their time and services free of charge, or profits are donated to charities. However, external stakeholder feedback indicates that industry input is underused,

particularly regarding relevant up-to-date industry knowledge that could contribute to graduates being better prepared for the workplace.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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**.

All stakeholders agreed that the teaching and learning at the academy was effective. Learners enjoyed the mix of theory and practice and the tutors' use of real-life experiences to enhance their learning. Thirty per cent of the tutors are academy graduates and 40 per cent identify as Māori or Pasifika. The latter matches the ethnic mix of the student body, providing good modelling and maximising learner access to support.

Literacy and numeracy is well supported by assessing all learners on programmes at levels 1-4, over and above the TEC requirement, with assessments at the start and end of a programme. This enables tutors to develop more accurate learner profiles and adapt their lesson plans, resources and delivery styles and provide more one-to-one time with a learner where required. The education manager checks that assessments are completed and sends the results to the tutors. This includes an analysis of the literacy and numeracy gains made, by class and by qualification. The academy's results exceed the 20 per cent benchmark reported by the TEC, with evidence of 30 per cent of the makeup learners assessed achieving a gain in numeracy skills between the start and finish of a full-time programme.

There is a rigorous recruitment process for potential tutors which includes them being observed teaching a lesson and sitting in on a theory lesson prior to being hired as a tutor.

Professional development is guided by clear policy. For example, within two years post-employment the tutor must complete assessor units (4098 *Use standards to assess candidate performance*; 11552 *Design and evaluate assessment materials*; 11281 *Prepare candidates for assessment against standards*) and the National Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy (Level 5). There is an internal professional development calendar and each tutor has an individual development plan. All staff (including non-teaching staff) were satisfied with the level, opportunities and availability of professional development opportunities.

Moderation plans are developed annually, with consideration given to internal and external moderation, practical moderation components, areas for improvement, and external moderation requirements for HITO and NZQA. The academy's recent moderation results have met both HITO and NZQA requirements. Under IEG ownership, the moderation process has been strengthened through cross-campus moderation between Cut Above Academy and Elite, both delivering programmes for

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the beauty sector. Practical moderation sessions between these schools occur twice a year. They have resulted in consistent outcomes and provided an opportunity to share good practice and contribute to teacher effectiveness.

Staff appraisals occur regularly and follow a proprietary methodology for identifying what went well (achievements), what did not go well (disappointments), and what are the future focus areas (development areas). The performance review takes into account learner feedback, lesson evaluations, participation in moderation and meetings, any complaints, professional development activities and peer or manager observation. This process is supported by the IEG human resources team who provide a raft of support including performance management, conducting appraisals and developing professional development plans. Analysis of student evaluations at programme level, across the last four years, show that teachers employ a variety of teaching methods that positively engage and motivate students.

The use of E-learning has been actively developed within the academy. A head of department has been supported to complete a Master's thesis on the development of E-Learning within a PTE environment. This person has a time allowance to lead the introduction of a blended approach to teaching within the academy.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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 recruitment team and industry liaison manager work closely and effectively with learners to provide guidance on career decisions and study choices. This includes personal interviews, academy tours, taster days and introduction sessions. The industry liaison manager visits each class twice a week. This regular contact allows issues to be dealt with proactively. While the academy is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, international student numbers are very low. However, there was evidence that staff understood the Code and that their compliance with it is reviewed regularly.

This year (2015) learner profiling has been introduced to clarify learning styles prior to a course beginning. Learners' long-term goals are also identified. These goals are reviewed fortnightly (together with the tutor and learner) and used to track ongoing progress.

Prior to the graduate entering the workforce, the academy assists with job skills and uses the Careers New Zealand website to help learners build a curriculum vitae and write letters of application. It also facilitates communication with community stakeholders who may be able to offer employment. Course component achievement certificates have been introduced into the level 3 hairdressing certificate to encourage and reward progress. There was evidence that these certificates promote pride and motivate learners to succeed. With the addition of Quantum to the IEG group, the academy has been able to provide counselling

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support to academy learners, and Quantum learners have been able to meet requirements for practical counselling hours, providing mutual benefits.

Forty per cent of staff identify as Māori or Pasifika, which makes it easier for students (over 50 per cent of whom are Māori or Pasifika) to communicate with the person whose culture they feel comfortable with in regard to educational or pastoral issues.

1.6 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 **Good**.

IEG has provided the academy with a more systematic, coherent governance and management framework which has led to clearer processes and procedures that are transparent and robust. This framework has led to worthwhile improvements for staff, such as the addition of the human resources department which has strengthened processes for recruiting staff and conducting performance reviews, and has assisted with staff professional development plans and provided performance management training for key managers.

The governance and management framework is supported by a proprietary model which includes daily meetings that encourage open communication and allow staff to be involved in annual planning and strategic goal-setting. For example, the one-page strategic plan that is mapped out with the academy director and IEG executive management team includes input from all areas of the academy. All these processes and practices support educational achievement as they provide a clear framework in which staff can operate, allowing them to focus on teaching and learning.

The IEG academic and quality assurance support team runs workshops around programme development, the Code of Practice, analysing data, and identifying trends. This team also conducts internal reviews to ensure delivery matches accreditation, and reviews any correspondence to NZQA, such as programme approval applications. These functions support the academy's management processes and add rigour to documentation.

Employers have contact with learners on site and there were examples of learners being employed as a result of their performance during work experience or on the recommendation of a respected tutor. However, a significant number of advisory committee members across the hairdressing, makeup and special effects areas agreed that there was no substitute for commercial experience and that learners would be better served by more time in industry than in the on-site salons. This needs to be balanced with the contrary employer view, also heard, that the salons provide good practice and preparation for subsequent employment.

Another issue noted by a small number of advisory members was that since the change of ownership it was more difficult to access tutors directly and that stakeholders were no longer sure where responsibilities for organising work experience lay. These concerns were communicated to the academy during the closing meeting (refer Recommendations).

The management of the academy responded by explaining that except for the owners themselves, and one staff member who had retired three weeks prior to the evaluation, there had been no significant staff changes relating to sector engagement. In addition, none of the academy's systems and processes relating to sector engagement had changed.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: Certificate in Hairdressing (Level 3)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Certificate in Makeup Artistry (Level 4)

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

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

Certificate in Makeup Artistry employers noted that learners needed more systematic access to industry specialists who had current industry knowledge. This would assist learners to be more realistic about work opportunities, such as the part-time, freelance nature of the makeup industry and that a makeup qualification alone would not be sufficient to provide a full-time career. This view was evidenced by graduates who had been unable to get jobs. Contributing factors were employers wanting makeup work done for free and competition from current learners on work experience who provided a free service (refer Recommendations).

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Cut Above Academy:

1. Re-engage with advisory committee members to discuss perceived barriers to attendance at meetings, the effects of a recent staff change on accessibility to academy personnel, and industry views on the work-readiness of graduates, including the role of the academy's on-site hairdressing and beauty salons.
2. Review the best ways to prepare Certificate in Makeup Artistry learners and graduates for the realities of the makeup industry, type of work available, and the most effective ways to engage with potential employers.

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 ([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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