



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report

School of Audio Engineering (NZ)
Limited

Date of report: 17 October 2023

About School of Audio Engineering (NZ) Limited

SAE Institute (SAE) provides training for the creative media industries, offering diplomas and degrees in audio engineering, music production and film-making.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment
Location:	12 Heather Street, Parnell, Auckland
Eligible to enrol intl students:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 180; Māori 27, Pasifika 33, male 158, female 25, learners with a disability 17 International: three
Number of staff:	19 full-time, 10 part-time
TEO profile:	School of Audio Engineering (NZ) Limited
Last EER outcome:	In 2019, NZQA was Highly Confident in SAE's educational performance and Highly Confident in its capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diploma in Electronic Music Production (Level 5) [ID 123520]• Bachelor of Music Production (Level 7) [ID 123529]
MoE number:	8174
NZQA reference:	C53238
Dates of EER visit:	7-9 June 2023

Summary of results

SAE has experienced some challenges since the last EER, including Covid-19 and the extreme Auckland weather events. This has had some impact on student outcomes. However, SAE responded well to these challenges. Students who complete gain valuable skills and knowledge for their chosen careers. There have been some gaps in self-assessment, identified in NZQA programme monitoring. SAE has been working towards rectifying these issues.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Completion rates have fluctuated since the last EER. This is partially due to the impact of Covid-19 and the extreme Auckland weather events on student engagement and achievement. However, course completion rates have still been higher than or the same as the PTE sector average over this period.
- However, students who are retained and complete gain useful skills and knowledge and enter relevant roles within their respective sectors.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Ongoing and effective relationships with industry contribute to value for graduates and industry.
- Programmes, and their delivery, are clearly aligned with industry requirements and expectations.
- NZQA has identified some gaps in relation to the Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2022. SAE had not self-identified these gaps but has taken action to address the requirements.
- Student support is effective across the organisation and provides value for students, which supports their achievement.
- SAE's parent company provides valuable support and resources, while allowing for operations to be localised.
- Compliance is generally well managed and effective. The use of compliance trackers ensures that SAE has strong systems for monitoring key NZQA and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) rules and requirements.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>SAE mainly uses course completion rates as a relevant and reliable metric for measuring completion rates.</p> <p>TEC methodology has created limitations in how SAE has analysed qualification completion rates. This is due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nested qualifications – students can transfer from a Diploma to the corresponding Bachelor programme, or vice-versa, which distorts TEC’s qualification completion EPI.• Historical data – qualification completion rates are calculated within a 4-year window for diplomas and a 6-year window for degrees. <p>This means that at the time of the EER, SAE was only beginning to enter a period of time where the data for their programmes are beginning to become available.</p> <p>The reasons above have limited the effectiveness of self-assessment, as it relies on course completions. However, the SAE management team have developed a metric which calculates estimated qualification completions. This will be beneficial in supporting self-assessment going forward.</p> <p>Course completion rates are generally strong, and students complete the courses, although there was a slight decline in completion rates in 2021 and 2022. SAE attributes this largely to the disruptions of Covid-19 and the Auckland weather events. This has had an impact on student achievement and retention.</p>

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

	<p>Generally, Māori and Pasifika complete at a slightly lower rate than non-Māori and Pasifika, and the overall rate. However, in some years they perform better than non-Māori and Pasifika (see appendix 1 for focus area completion rates). One of the main reasons for the disparity in the focus areas is low enrolment numbers. SAE has strategies and initiatives in place aligned with the Tertiary Education Strategy, which includes attracting more Māori and Pasifika students and supporting their achievement.</p> <p>SAE collates data on completion rates for students with disabilities, and as per TEC requirements has been reporting this data since 2020. Whilst the utility of this data (see appendix 1) is limited because a low number of students declare a disability, the number of learners with a disability increased from 5% in 2019 to 9% in 2022. Students who have a disability are well supported to achieve in their respective programme(s).</p> <p>Some students who may have disabilities, but have not declared their disability, still have access to support, and are supported to achieve. These learners are not necessarily reflected in their data of learners with disabilities.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Achievement rates have fluctuated since the last EER, and there are limitations in the lack of availability of qualification completion rates. However, the data that SAE uses shows that students are completing courses at high rates. The limitations in the access and availability of data have had a small impact on the ability to carry out comprehensive self-assessment. SAE has developed some of their own metrics to strengthen this.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	SAE maintains strong connections and alignment with its industries. This is supported by formal and informal relationships with industry employers, and the connection

Final report

	<p>many staff members have with industry. Feedback from staff and students shows that stakeholders strongly value the training. This is supported by SAE's Creative Industries Advisory Committee (CIAC), which includes industry leaders.</p> <p>Graduates gain useful skills and knowledge that translates well to real-world environments. Work-integrated learning and collaborative projects support the skills of graduates which are valued by industry.</p> <p>There is a generally high response rate to graduate surveys. This provides good data for analysis of graduate destinations, and to some extent the value of the training for graduates. From 2019 to 2023, graduate destinations have remained relatively constant, and over 50 per cent of graduates go into the same or a related field. Of the graduates who go into a different field, more than half do so by their own choice.</p> <p>Freelance contracting and full-time employment are the most common outcomes for graduates. However, many graduates enter multiple work or study situations (i.e. freelance contractor and part-time employment). Self-assessment would be strengthened by extrapolating the work or study data to understand how many graduates enter more than one pathway, and what their main outcome is (e.g. where they spend most of their time).</p> <p>From 2019 and 2020 to 2022 there has been a 13 per cent drop in the number of graduates who 'would... be happy to recommend SAE to others'. However, Graduate Destination surveys since the last EER show the percentage of graduates stating that they would not be willing to recommend SAE is, consistently below 2%. The increase in graduates who say they 'maybe' would recommend SAE to others has had the main increase. The main reasons for this are that it would depend on the individual person's career goals, concerns about career stability, and concerns about lack of gender diversity in the sector. SAE understands these reasons, and their ongoing self-assessment is supported by the survey results.</p> <p>Industry stakeholders from CIAC told the evaluators that SAE is the first choice for employers looking for interns and graduates.</p>
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Conclusion:	Strong support from the creative industries indicates that graduates with strong skills are valued by industry. It also indicated a reciprocal relationship where creative industries provide support to SAE.
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1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Prior to the last EER, SAE refreshed its programme portfolio. Recent degree monitoring reports commend SAE for their currency and capability to deliver these programmes. Recommendations from previous degree monitoring reports have been addressed and are followed through for monitoring by the academic board. This is all within the context of the extended Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and extreme weather events in Auckland.</p> <p>Learning activities and environments are designed in an engaging way that supports the needs of the students and prepares them for work. This includes relevant work-integrated learning.</p> <p>SAE has excellent teaching and learning resources, relevant to the industries it works with. The CIAC provides input into industry expectations and requirements to ensure students have appropriate tools to provide evidence for assessments in a way that replicates industry expectations.</p> <p>Staff are well qualified and engaged in industry. This provides value to students who in turn get to learn from academics who are also practitioners. This ensures content is relevant and current.</p> <p>Programmes are effectively reviewed annually through Programme Annual Self-Assessment (PASA) reports, with input from course reviews.</p> <p>The academic board and the various committees that feed information to the academic board also provide effective oversight of most programme and academic requirements.</p>

	<p>However, NZQA programme monitoring (internal moderation) identified some gaps in assessment and moderation practices in the Diploma in Audio Engineering and Production. SAE submitted an action plan, which satisfactory addressed four of the seven requirements. The gaps and requirements reduce confidence in consistent assessment that meets the learning outcomes. However, this finding does not fully undermine the validity of the award of the qualification, as the programme design clearly meets the important needs of stakeholders. SAE is working towards addressing these requirements and considering how they impact across programmes.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Programmes have been designed with stakeholders at the centre, and have strong, ongoing input by CIAC and the academic board. Learning activities are well designed to provide value to the learners. However, some NZQA programme monitoring findings reduce the confidence in robust assessment that leads to the learning outcomes in some assessments.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>SAE has a strong focus on affirming all students, as evidenced by conversations with staff and students. The academic board notes that during challenging times (particularly with Covid-19), many students find SAE a safe and welcoming place – and enjoy coming to campus.</p> <p>SAE is highly attentive to the needs of the students, from pre-enrolment to the end of their study. Goals and personal needs (including disabilities where applicable) are well understood, and the students are supported well.</p> <p>Students who are at risk are monitored via the attendance council, who monitor attendance and provide interventions where required. Individual learning plans are one example of an intervention that enables appropriate monitoring and follow-up of student progress.</p> <p>Attendance has improved since 2022. The attendance council discusses learners on an individual basis, and has</p>

	<p>robust systems for appropriate interventions to improve attendance. However, this process would be strengthened by analysing trends by programme and cohort.</p> <p>Implementation of the Code of Practice² has been effective, and self-review indicates that SAE is appropriately placed for this stage of the process. This is well documented. Staff are actively involved and aware of the Code requirements.</p> <p>Most student feedback indicated that the student voice is well understood and informs change at SAE. Students are heard informally through interactions with support staff, studio supervisors and lecturers, as well as through formal channels such as formal surveys.</p> <p>Staff are supported by attending professional development to support a diverse range of priority learner groups. There is strong evidence to suggest that SAE will continue to explore how priority groups can continue to be supported.</p>
Conclusion:	The learning environments and wrap-around student support, from entry to exit, provide students with the support they need to achieve their goals.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>SAE has a clear organisational purpose, backed by its mission to provide specialist vocational and higher education courses to inspire and develop graduates. This is supported by its strong relationships with its parent organisation, Navitas, which provides resources and advice while allowing operations to be contextualised for the local environment. This is a key organisational strength.</p> <p>SAE has a clear goal to equip graduates for success in their respective industries. This goal is supported by staff. Lecturers are appropriately qualified, supported with</p>

² Tertiary and International Learners Code of Practice

	<p>professional development, and are involved with their respective industries.</p> <p>Governance and management and the academic leadership are generally strong. SAE has in place a range of procedures for addressing concerns, tracking necessary actions, and conducting self assessment effectively. However, some issues identified in the NZQA programme monitoring activity were not identified by SAE or fully rectified after the first monitoring activity, which required a follow-up. This shows that while there is evidence of good self-assessment overall, there are some gaps and weaknesses in the PTE’s capability to support educational achievement.</p> <p>There have been some internal and external challenges since the last EER. These include Covid-19, recent extreme Auckland weather events, teething issues in implementing new programmes and courses, and under-delivery of some TEC funding. SAE has supported educational achievement well over this period.</p> <p>The roll-out of a project in one of the professional practice courses had some issues with engagement when it was first introduced. This suggests a weakness in the initial implementation. That said, SAE adequately responded to feedback. SAE promptly addressed these concerns by incorporating student feedback and modifying the content. As a result, the adjustments made have garnered positive feedback.</p> <p>SAE has a demonstrated commitment to Mātauranga Māori. This is evidenced by the appointment of cultural advisor who has guided SAE to incorporate Mātauranga Māori across the organisation. Staff and students are well supported through multiple initiatives to build networks and to expand and grow their cultural competency.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>SAE’s strong relationships with Navitas and industry are a strength. SAE benefits from the resources of Navitas. These relationships are effective in supporting educational achievement. However, there have been some identified gaps in self-assessment that have had some impact.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>SAE has strong processes in place for tracking compliance. This includes compliance trackers for NZQA and TEC rules and requirements. This is effective in monitoring and actioning requirements</p> <p>A sample of compliance trackers, and a sample of compliance responsibilities (e.g. NZQA attestations) showed how effective management of compliance responsibilities has led to generally strong outcomes.</p> <p>Requirements for international students are managed effectively. Some learners did not have a visa at the time their programme was supposed to start, so SAE ensured these students did not attend class until their visa arrived. This indicates a good understanding of international student legal requirements.</p> <p>A review of international student files identified one breach in the Code of Practice. One learner did not have insurance for the first day they were in New Zealand. SAE proactively identified and acknowledged this and has processes in place to ensure students are compliant in the future.</p> <p>The recent programme monitoring activity has identified gaps in ongoing compliance with the Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2022 in 4.1 criterion (moderation) and 6.1 criterion 1 (assessment and moderation). This was identified by NZQA, and not proactively by SAE. However, SAE has been active in trying to rectify the issues and to consider the impact across programmes.</p>
Conclusion:	SAE is generally effective in the management of key compliance requirements. There have been some gaps that have been self-identified or identified by NZQA. However, SAE has actively worked to address these.

Focus areas

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

2.1 Diploma in Electronic Music Production (Level 5)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Completion rates have fluctuated since the last EER. However, they have been higher than or the same as the PTE sector average.</p> <p>SAE benchmarks their achievement, primarily using TEC Education Performance Indicators Commitments (EPICs).</p>

2.2 Bachelor of Music Production (Level 7)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Course completion rates are strong. They have been over 80 per cent since 2019. Māori learners have generally achieved around the same rate as non-Māori and non-Pasifika. Pasifika learners have achieved lower than non-Māori and non-Pasifika. That said, low Pasifika participation rates have a disproportionate impact on course completion rates for that cohort.</p> <p>Positive degree monitoring reports, strong research outputs and continuous improvement support strong self-assessment and indicate programme currency.</p>

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 School of Audio Engineering (NZ) Limited:

- Expand the collection of graduate destination data to identify how many graduates have more than one outcome (for example, full-time employment and volunteering, or part-time employment and freelancing).
- Collate and analyse attendance data across courses and programmes to identify and address any trends.

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.

- Address the gaps identified in the NZQA programme monitoring report to ensure ongoing compliance with the Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2022 in 4.1 criterion (moderation) and 6.1 criterion 1 (assessment and moderation).

Appendix 1

NZ3427				
Diploma in Electronic Music Production	2019	2020	2021	2022
Course completion rate overall	79%	92%	69%	72%
Course completion rate – Pasifika	69%	100%	50%	64%
Course completion rate – Māori	84%	100%	59%	72%
Course completion rate – learners with disabilities	n/a	75%	58%	67%
Course completion rate – other	79%	89%	85%	76%
Withdrawal rate (students who discontinued)	1/13	5/28	6/41	3/26*
PC3824				
Bachelor of Music Production	2019	2020	2021	2022
Course completion rate overall	80%	89%	86%	85%
Course completion rate – Pasifika	74%	85%	85%	73%
Course completion rate – Māori	79%	94%	79%	95%
Course completion rate – learners with disabilities	n/a	88%	58%	32%
Course completion rate – other	84%	91%	89%	88%
Withdrawal rate (students who discontinued)	5/25	2/42	4/59	4/48

Data provided by SAE

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud³*
- *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.*

³ 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.

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

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

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021. The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

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

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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