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External Evaluation and Review Report

Medical Research Institute of New
Zealand

Date of report: 11 October 2019

About Medical Research Institute of New Zealand

The Medical Research Institute of New Zealand (MRINZ) is an independent medical research organisation dedicated to investigating the causes of important public health problems in New Zealand and internationally. Its focus is on research which has the potential to lead to improvements in clinical management.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 7, CSB Building, Wellington Regional Hospital, Newtown, Wellington
Code of Practice signatory:	Not a signatory
Number of students:	Domestic: four International: nil
Number of staff:	22 full-time and 26 part-time ¹
TEO profile:	See: NZQA - Medical Research Institute of NZ
Last EER outcome:	MRINZ's previous EER outcome in 2015 was Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	This EER looked at one focus area: Medical Doctorate (MD) (Level 10) – this is MRINZ's only education programme. ²
MoE number:	7132
NZQA reference:	C35858
Date of EER visit:	27 August 2019

¹ This number includes all staff employed by MRINZ including those directly involved with the delivery of the MD.

² MRINZ also provides supervision for between five and 10 PhD students from Victoria University, Wellington.

Summary of Results

MRINZ is a high quality, specialty provider which produces graduates who are valued by the medical research community and who contribute positively to the medical profession.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- MRINZ has had 100 per cent successful completion of the MD degree since introducing it in 2013. Students and graduates are achieving their personal, academic and career goals, and those interviewed expressed high levels of satisfaction with their programme.
- The purpose of the MD degree is to train doctors – in particular junior doctors who are in specialist training – in clinical research. It enhances their opportunities to pursue academic research-based medical careers as independent clinician researchers. This increases New Zealand’s workforce capacity in this field.
- MRINZ is using its professional connections and relationships effectively to develop and deliver a programme that meets individual and stakeholder needs.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

- The MD is supervised by experienced, qualified staff who use their considerable medical and research experience to ensure the degree is relevant, engaging and internationally credible.
- The organisation is well managed and has a clear philosophy and values which are reflected throughout the operation. The activities are well resourced and MRINZ uses its resources effectively. Important compliance accountabilities are being managed effectively.
- Records and discussions indicate that self-assessment is well embedded and is comprehensive, authentic and transparent. NZQA is highly confident that MRINZ will continue to use findings insightfully to bring about worthwhile and ongoing improvements.

Key evaluation question findings³

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students at MRINZ achieve excellent results. All three students who enrolled at, or near, the outset of the programme in 2013 have successfully completed their Medical Doctorate (MD). The MRINZ board of studies reviews the progress of each student every quarter, confirming that the four students currently enrolled are all on track to complete within prescribed timeframes. Students are provided with regular and ongoing feedback on their progress.</p> <p>The high level of skills and knowledge the students acquire is demonstrated in their research publications. MRINZ is New Zealand's most productive independent medical research organisation.⁴ MRINZ students publish manuscripts in international medical journals as first author, which forms the basis of their MDs. To date, findings from research published by the MD students have been incorporated into guidelines such as GINA (Global Initiative for Asthma), and the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ's adult asthma guidelines.</p>
Conclusion:	Evidence from stakeholders, including graduates, indicates that the MRINZ MD degree produces high-value outcomes.

³ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

⁴ As evidenced by Scopus which is the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature.

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

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>One of the strong features of the MD degree is its flexibility in matching the personal and professional needs of the students with 'real-world' research projects. Being able to undertake research for the MD while maintaining a measure of clinical practice was a key attraction for the students enrolling in the degree.</p> <p>While fulfilling the needs of students, the MD degree also directly addresses the key recommendation of a health select committee report: that clinical research should be established as a core activity undertaken by district health boards. The qualification also directly addresses one of the key priorities of the Health Research Council of New Zealand: to build and maintain research capacity and capability by supporting targeted career development pathways.</p> <p>Study and research at MRINZ are highly structured and systematised, enabling high levels of guidance and support for the students. Each student has a primary supervisor with whom they meet at least weekly, a specialist topic supervisor who may be external to MRINZ, plus a team of secondary supervisors who are expert in various aspects of research methodology.⁵ This results in strong engagement by the students.</p> <p>Academic standards and integrity are clear, understood and maintained through the board of studies which includes representation from both within the organisation and from the university sector. MD students are examined by an international panel of three independent experts.</p>
Conclusion:	The MD degree effectively aligns the needs of the medical profession with the needs of individual students.

⁵ For example: data collection and analysis, statistics, population demographics, research ethics, etc.

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

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>MRINZ is a charitable trust, governed by a board of trustees with strong educational, medical, financial, cultural and legal expertise, resulting in sound governance and a sustainable business model. The organisation is well managed and has a clear philosophy, purpose and values. MRINZ has well-established administration and management systems and procedures in place, with ethical practices.</p> <p>MRINZ employs and values a team of well-qualified, experienced and, in many cases, internationally recognised, staff. Academic leadership is strong, complemented by an experienced board of studies including external membership.</p> <p>MRINZ has a sound understanding of its compliance accountabilities and manages effectively to ensure obligations are met. The administration manager has detailed processes to assist with bring-up of deadlines and management of required actions. Indications of effective compliance management include: NZQA attestations and returns have been submitted within required timeframes; financial auditing complies with the Charitable Trusts Act; all research meets the ethical requirements as laid down by the Health Research Council of New Zealand and/or the Health and Disabilities Commission Ethics Committee and/or the Australia and New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry.</p> <p>The organisation encourages reflection on its role and makes ongoing and continuous improvements to how it meets the needs of students and other stakeholders. Self-assessment is being well led by management and is comprehensively understood and adopted.</p>
Conclusion:	MRINZ has a clear vision and understanding of its business and has strong leadership. Key compliance accountabilities are well understood and met. Monitoring of performance is regular, transparent and robust, resulting in highly effective support for educational achievement.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Medical Doctorate

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

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

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

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

Appendix

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published 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 fraud⁶*
- *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.*

⁶ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

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 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, 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 2016. 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/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz