



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report

Medical Research Institute of New
Zealand

Date of report: 22 August 2023

About Medical Research Institute of New Zealand

The Medical Research Institute of New Zealand (MRINZ) is a Wellington-based, independent, non-profit medical research organisation dedicated to investigating the causes of important public health problems. MRINZ offers the NZQA-approved level 10 Medical Doctorate degree to medical doctors.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 7, CSB Building, Wellington Regional Hospital, Riddiford Street, Newtown, Wellington
Eligible to enrol international students:	Yes, as of 7 June 2023
Number of students:	MRINZ intends enrolling three international students in 2023
Number of staff:	MRINZ employs 27 full-time equivalents and 30 part-time
TEO profile:	Medical Research Institute of New Zealand Typically, students are employed by MRINZ while they conduct research that forms part of the Medical Doctorate. Despite being a doctoral degree, MRINZ receives no government funding for it.
Last EER outcome:	At the last EER in 2019, NZQA was Highly Confident in both MRINZ's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	The Medical Doctorate, being MRINZ's sole NZQA-approved programme, was the EER focus area.
MoE number:	7132
NZQA reference:	C54053
Dates of EER visit:	1 and 2 June 2023

Summary of results

MRINZ's Medical Doctorate provides a unique, quality programme and learning experience through which medical doctors complete advanced, original clinical research that informs public health. Students build their research knowledge, career potential and pathways.

Highly Confident in educational performance	<p>MRINZ meets the most important needs of the students well. Students develop and grow their knowledge of clinical research and methods in a unique and highly skilled learning environment.</p> <p>The PTE guides and supports the students to produce high quality programmes of research and publications that contribute original knowledge to clinical practice and public health. The students gain prestigious roles and advance their career pathways.</p>
Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment	<p>Highly effective processes contribute to these valued outcomes. These include ongoing supervision by experienced, accomplished MRINZ staff, academic oversight and leadership from an experienced board of studies, and the examination of student work by subject matter experts.</p> <p>MRINZ understands and reviews students' progress, outcomes and academic processes through close student engagement and supervision, academic oversight, and well-designed student questionnaires.</p> <p>The PTE uses self-assessment information in an insightful way to support student outcomes and make improvements. Standard operating procedures are in place across all key areas and are reviewed according to a cycle. Through the EER, MRINZ identified a couple of areas for improving the Medical Doctorate's standard operating procedure and its review.</p> <p>MRINZ manages its compliance accountabilities well, including NZQA requirements. Self-assessment against NZQA accountabilities could be more proactive and supported by the organisation.</p>

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>All seven students who have enrolled in the Medical Doctorate since the programme's inception (2014) have successfully completed and gained the qualification.</p> <p>The Medical Doctorate offers students the unique opportunity to establish and build research knowledge and interests in an environment where crucial national and internationally significant health research is undertaken under the guidance and supervision of renowned researchers.</p> <p>Students are supported to develop coherent and advanced programmes of research that result in original contributions to medicine and the production of first author research publications that appear in peer reviewed journals.</p> <p>Throughout their learning journey, the students gain and grow their understanding of clinical research knowledge and methods, including the ability to interpret data within clinical practice. Other core skills acquired include leadership and collaborative working within this context, and knowledge of good clinical and ethical practices.</p> <p>MRINZ understands student progress and achievement well as this is closely and frequently reviewed by the student supervisors and staff, and quarterly by the board of studies.</p> <p>Student questionnaires are well designed, providing student reflections on how MRINZ has improved students' research knowledge and the impact on their practice and work.</p>
Conclusion:	Students establish and grow their knowledge of clinical research and complete original programmes of advanced research, with findings published in peer reviewed journals.

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

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students complete research that contributes new knowledge to public health issues which benefits clinical practice and health outcomes. Their research and first author publications in peer reviewed journals is a favourable factor when graduates are being considered for career opportunities.</p> <p>Graduates identify (in written feedback) that they are placed in a stronger position to apply for more prestigious jobs, and with an academic focus, directly due to the Medical Doctorate. Graduate outcomes described by MRINZ show that graduates have attained, or are on the pathway to acquire, academic, teaching and advisory positions, as well as consulting, leadership and leading roles in their professional areas of interest.</p> <p>Graduate feedback identifies that the Medical Doctorate and the learning and research experience with MRINZ has informed and changed their own clinical practices – the application of research is now central to their work and roles. As NZQA’s 2022 degree monitoring report states, ‘the MD degree gives them the authority that they need to also carry out medical research in their chosen area of employment, apply for grants, and continue publishing papers or books in their field’.</p> <p>MRINZ has an established research programme investigating Māori and Pasifika health. It supports capability building of Māori staff and clinical practice in the community at two marae, and takes clinical trials to marae to gain strong Māori demographic representation in these trials. MRINZ’s research significantly impacts communities with poor health outcomes, including, for example, a focus on respiratory health and Covid-19.</p> <p>While the Medical Doctorate is yet to have a Māori or Pasifika student enrol, MRINZ provides a summer internship research programme for Māori medical students. This gives a small number of Māori students the opportunity to be supervised and have an active role in a research project. They experience and learn about the career potential of clinical research. They also</p>

	<p>learn about the Medical Doctorate. MRINZ has recently extended the internship to Pasifika.</p> <p>MRINZ's student questionnaire is well designed to understand graduate outcomes. Graduate pathways are well understood. MRINZ intends reviewing the Medical Doctorate's standard operating procedure to embed a procedure to record and aggregate graduate pathway information. The PTE considers that this would give more insight into graduate outcomes than the intended stakeholder questionnaire which is referred to in the standard operating procedure.</p>
Conclusion:	The Medical Doctorate and learning and research experience at MRINZ contributes significantly to individual's career pathways and public health. Graduate outcomes are well understood.

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:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The Medical Doctorate matches the needs of students extremely well. Programmes of research are crafted around the research interests of the students, enabling them to develop and complete advanced original research. Because of this, the Medical Doctorate contributes to public health and the wider community.</p> <p>Students receive expert and close guidance, support and supervision. Their work is examined by subject matter experts, including those who are internationally renowned. This is in addition to the peer review of students' individual research papers that contribute to the Medical Doctorate, before being accepted for publication. As the NZQA 2022 monitoring report states: 'The papers are assured of high quality as each paper has been through a journal's rigorous international peer review process'. To date, there have been no 'not yet met' decisions through the examination of students' work, indicating the robustness of the research and the quality of supervision and the Medical Doctorate acceptance process.</p> <p>Examiner feedback and decisions are reviewed by MRINZ's board of studies who oversee full engagement in any examiner</p>

	<p>recommendations. This provides appropriate academic oversight and rigour and supports the quality of the end product.</p> <p>The Medical Doctorate provides an important, valued alternative pathway to a PhD, providing the opportunity for clinicians to complete a higher degree typically in a shorter timeframe while remaining active in clinical practice. Students are usually employed by MRINZ and receive full employee benefits while conducting their research.</p> <p>External review has been continually positive (successive NZQA programme monitoring and EER). Programme review has largely consisted of ongoing internal and external review of student work, as well as student feedback. This is appropriate given the small number of students and there having been no changes to the programme to date. As such, the process of a full five-year programme review stipulated in the Medical Doctorate standard operating procedure has not yet been undertaken. During the EER, MRINZ identified a couple of areas in the standard operating procedure to review with the board of studies to be more fit for purpose. Some inconsistent programme information in different documents is also to be updated.</p> <p>All graduate questionnaires confirm a high level of satisfaction and emphatic recommendations for others to enrol in the Medical Doctorate. Feedback is positive and validating. Student suggestions for enhancement have been responded to.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>The programme matches the needs of students well and contributes important new knowledge to public health. Expert supervision, examination, peer review and oversight validates and ensures high quality student work.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>A robust, success-focused enrolment acceptance process is in place and is aligned to the organisation's mission. The process of working towards the Medical Doctorate begins long before enrolment. Potential students as employees of MRINZ are guided and supported to build programmes of research that demonstrate coherence and will add new knowledge and potentially change clinical practice.</p> <p>The board of studies has a key role in assessing and approving enrolments for the Medical Doctorate. The board regularly monitor students' progress, including through formal supervisor reports and subsequent engagement in examiner feedback.</p> <p>Supervision is closely built around the student and their research. Students are supported by experienced, accomplished MRINZ staff with regular supervisory meetings and daily working contact. Supervision is collegial, with all relevant staff invested in the student to advance their work. The excellence of the supervision is a strong theme present in student feedback, as is the collegial learning environment. Supervisors regularly engage in professional development as a component of College of Physician requirements.</p> <p>Established structures support the safety and wellbeing of the students, including as employees of MRINZ. This includes induction into the organisation's human resource and health and safety policies and procedures, an employee assistance programme, adherence to ethical standards and requirements, and good clinical practice training. MRINZ asks students to identify if they have additional learning needs, with the aim of developing a plan of support as needed. To date, no students have identified as disabled or with additional learning needs. MRINZ supports staff and students with significant health concerns, including providing additional leave time as needed.</p>
Conclusion:	Students are closely and effectively supported and supervised before they enrol and continually until they complete the degree.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>MRINZ has a clear purpose and direction which underlies the focus of programmes of research supported through the Medical Doctorate, and the close level of supervision and guidance provided to students to support the production of high quality original research.</p> <p>MRINZ provides excellent academic leadership and opportunities to support student achievement through the students' employment tenure and learning experiences at the PTE. This is within an environment and organisation which is recognised for its work of national significance. The Health Research Council of New Zealand recently awarded MRINZ funding for seven years to build research and innovation capability contributing to equitable health outcomes.</p> <p>MRINZ's commitment to Māori health evidence is demonstrated through research studies in areas of health that more heavily impact Māori and through high involvement of Māori in such studies. As stated in 1.2, MRINZ supports the educational development of Māori medical students and interns and is building its ability to also contribute to Pasifika health.</p> <p>Academic leadership is supported by an esteemed and established board of studies who are well versed in student progress. The board includes independent membership to provide oversight and input from an external and objective perspective. In addition, the sustainability of MRINZ is supported through three deputy director roles and the appointment of two people per role for specific functions.</p> <p>The board of studies meets as required and is in close and regular communication with the PTE management. There is recognition by board representatives that the establishment of regular general board meetings could add value, and this is an intended focus for review by MRINZ.</p> <p>Students, staff and governance and management actively and regularly participate in professional development. A programme of professional development supports students/staff and includes</p>

	good clinical practice training, tikanga and te tiriti training. MRINZ undertakes annual staff appraisals.
Conclusion:	Educational achievement is well supported by effective academic leadership and a quality, highly supportive learning environment where nationally significant research is conducted.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>MRINZ has a sound understanding of most key compliance accountabilities to enable the PTE to manage them effectively to meet their obligations. Indications of effective compliance management include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most NZQA attestations and returns have been submitted on time • excellent validation of the delivery of the Medical Doctorate through past and recent external monitoring • adherence to the Medical Council Code of Conduct and Good Clinical Practice guidelines and ethical requirements for conducting medical trials • standard operating procedures in place across key areas and subject to cycles of review. <p>MRINZ could be more proactive and comprehensive in its self-assessment of the programme's standard operating procedures and in managing NZQA compliance accountabilities. There is potentially a need for increased support and oversight for this function.</p> <p>MRINZ was not aware that it needed to become an international signatory to the Code of Practice to enrol international students. Programme information has been variable about whether three or four minimum publications are required (the minimum requirement is three). One fit and proper person declaration is outstanding for a trustee. These issues have not had a significant impact – as part of their work students typically publish more than four publications, and MRINZ had not enrolled any international students while it lacked signatory</p>

	<p>status to the Code of Practice. Further, on becoming aware of the signatory requirement, MRINZ immediately applied to NZQA for signatory approval, which has been granted.</p> <p>MRINZ has continued to be successful in securing seven-year funding from the Health Research Council following external panel reviews into research and organisational performance.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>MRINZ manages its compliance accountabilities well. The management of NZQA accountabilities is an area to strengthen.</p>

Focus areas

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

2.1 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.

NZQA recommends that the Medical Research Institute of New Zealand:

- Periodically review programme requirements and documentation against programme approval documentation and the Medical Doctorate standard operating procedure to ensure alignment to requirements and that both are fit for purpose.
- Review internal self-review processes for understanding and managing NZQA compliance accountabilities, including considering more support and oversight for this function.
- Consider establishing periodic general meetings of the board of studies to support wider, proactive self-review.
- Formalise a process to record and aggregate existing understanding of graduate outcomes to more transparently demonstrate the value-add of the Medical Doctorate.

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 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.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022, 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 excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 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, micro-credentials 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 2022. 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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