

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

## South Pacific College of Natural Medicine

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 30 October 2014

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*Final Report*

# Purpose of this Report

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

## Introduction

### 1. TEO in context

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Name of TEO:                   | South Pacific College of Natural Medicine   |
| Type:                          | Private training establishment (PTE)  |
| Location:                      | 8-12 Arthur St, Ellerslie, Auckland   |
| Delivery sites:                | As above  |
| First registered:              | 16 September 1991   |
| Courses currently delivered:   | Bachelor of Natural Medicine (Level 7)  |
| Code of Practice signatory:    | Yes   |
| Number of students:            | Domestic: 142 students enrolled in 2014 (year to date) (98 equivalent full-time students)<br><br>Approximately 94 per cent of students are female, 12 per cent are Māori, 3 per cent are Pasifika, and 10 per cent are Asian.<br><br>International: one student from Malaysia was enrolled at the time of the external evaluation and review (EER). |
| Number of staff:               | Seven full-time staff and 12 part-time staff  |
| Scope of active accreditation: | Bachelor of Natural Medicine  |
| Distinctive characteristics:   | Students are able to complete the first two years of the degree on-campus, online or through a combination of both delivery modes. The final year must be completed on-campus, and includes   |

clinical practice components. Approximately half of students are enrolled for online or blended delivery modes.

Recent significant changes: South Pacific College of Natural Medicine (SPCNM) commenced delivery of the Bachelor of Natural Medicine in 2010. In September 2013, NZQA approved a revised curriculum for the degree programme (Type 2 programme change), which is being introduced in 2014.

SPCNM submitted an application for a Graduate Diploma in Traditional Māori Medicine to NZQA in February 2014. A final decision on this application had not been made at the time of the EER.

Recent senior management appointments include the deputy director clinical and research and the deputy director academic (both of which resulted from a restructure in 2013), and the manager admissions and enrolments.

The membership of the governance body, the board of trustees, has recently changed significantly, including the appointment of a new chairperson (with effect from August 2014). Board membership includes three members of the SPCNM Incorporated Society (one of whom is a current staff member) and three independent members with relevant expertise.

Previous quality assurance history: NZQA degree monitor reports (final report for 2013 and draft report for 2014) record that SPCNM is delivering the degree in accordance with NZQA approval and accreditation, and the qualification is still degree-worthy and meets the needs of stakeholders. The reports also confirm that SPCNM is acting on the recommendations of the monitor and that the culture of research continues to develop within the college.

SPCNM met NZQA national external moderation requirements in 2012, but no longer assesses against unit standards.

The previous EER of SPCNM was held in May 2010, when NZQA was Highly Confident in the PTE's educational performance and Highly

Confident in its capability in self-assessment.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER consisted of the following focus areas:

- Governance, management and strategy, which is a mandatory focus area (international students was included in this focus area)
- Bachelor of Natural Medicine (Level 7), which is the sole programme offered by SPCNM
- Online learning, as approximately half of all students enrolled on the Bachelor of Natural Medicine opt to study through distance or blended delivery during years one and two of the degree.

## 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.*

SPCNM submitted self-assessment material to inform the scoping of the EER.

Two evaluators visited SPCNM over two days. Interviews were conducted with the director, the deputy director academic, the deputy director clinical and research, the registrar, the admissions and enrolment manager, the library manager, four lecturers (one of whom is also on the board of trustees), and 12 on-campus students. Phone interviews were also conducted with three online students, the newly appointed chair of the board of trustees, a member of the degree advisory committee (who has also recently taught at SPCNM), two employers, one recent graduate, and a representative of the New Zealand Association of Medical Herbalists.

A variety of management, teaching and procedural documents were sighted (in paper and online), including meeting minutes, annual programme reports, course outlines and course materials, reports on learner and other stakeholder feedback, and staff and student handbooks.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **South Pacific College of Natural Medicine**.

The reasons for this judgement are as follows:

- SPCNM is highly effective in meeting the needs of learners and other stakeholders. It is evident that curriculum and programme delivery is subject to constant review and improvement, and there are high levels of student and stakeholder satisfaction.
- Sustained high levels of learner achievement are underpinned by rigorous assessment and moderation practices. For example, in 2013 SPCNM achieved a course completion rate of 89 per cent (91 per cent in 2012) compared with the sector median of 85 per cent. SPCNM monitors individual course results and progression closely and reports that students studying through distance delivery are passing courses at the same rate as on-campus students.
- SPCNM students acquire relevant knowledge in natural medicine, a thorough grounding in relevant science subjects, research methods and business management, and practical clinical skills which prepare them for employment and professional practice in the natural health industry. A survey of 2013 graduates shows that 79 per cent gained relevant employment (including in part-time positions) within four months of completion of the degree.
- There is good evidence of comprehensive management, academic and administrative procedures and practices that are highly effective in supporting teaching and learning and ensuring the provision of high-quality learner support.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **South Pacific College of Natural Medicine**.

The reasons for this judgement are as follows:

- SPCNM has a systematic and thorough approach to self-assessment which involves staff at all levels of the organisation and is resulting in many worthwhile changes which are contributing to improved educational performance and learner outcomes. Examples include the strengthening of the clinical practice component, internal moderation processes and significant improvements to library and learning services.
- A variety of surveys are used to gather feedback from learners and other stakeholders which is used to identify areas for improvement. The small group instructional diagnostic (SGID) process, which is administered for every course delivery, is a rich source of information for curriculum review and enhancing the effectiveness of teaching. Others, such as the graduate survey, require further development to provide a fuller understanding of the valued outcomes for their graduates.
- SPCNM management regularly collates and analyses information gathered from a wide range of sources, and reports findings and action plans to the degree advisory committee, the academic board and the board of trustees. Further analysis of withdrawal and learner achievement data would provide greater understanding and evidence of the relative performance of student groups (such as by the mode of delivery or ethnicity). It would also improve SPCNM's ability to identify areas for particular attention and to track the impact of changes on learner outcomes.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 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**.

SPCNM demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting excellent learner achievement at all levels of the organisation. SPCNM sets and meets high expectations for course and qualification completion and benchmarks against other providers of natural health education. Educational performance indicator (EPI) data published by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) confirms SPCNM's success in sustaining high levels of achievement since the Bachelor of Natural Medicine was introduced in 2010, which compare favourably with benchmarked providers of natural health qualifications. A rigorous and comprehensive internal moderation process which entails pre- and post-assessment moderation of all courses each year was introduced at the beginning of 2013 and provides a high level of confidence in the reliability of these results.

The following table shows steady improvement over the last three years and consistently high levels of learner achievement overall.

| <b>SPCNM learner achievement data, 2011-2013 (compared to sector medians)</b> |           |            |            |
|---|-----------|------------|------------|
|   | 2011      | 2012       | 2013       |
| Course completion   | 80% (86%) | 91% (85%)  | 89% (85%)  |
| Qualification completion <sup>2</sup>   | 95% (80%) | 100% (82%) | 100% (80%) |
| Retained in study   | 46% (75%) | 61% (77%)  | 86% (77%)  |

SPCNM tracks learner achievement very closely and has comprehensive knowledge of individual student progress, which informs the provision of targeted learner support. It is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about the achievement rates for Māori and Pasifika students, given the small numbers, although summary data suggests that rates are broadly comparable with the student population overall. SPCNM also reports that online students (the majority of whom are part-time) are passing courses at the same rate as on-campus students, although there is a higher rate of withdrawal by those studying online.

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

<sup>2</sup> Qualification completion rates for 2012 and 2013 reflect more students completing the qualification than enrolling in it, as it is a three-year programme with the first year of delivery in 2010, and includes students transitioning from previous diploma programmes.



Analysis has recently begun to establish stronger empirical evidence of the comparative academic success of the online students. Further analysis of withdrawal and learner achievement data would provide greater understanding of the relative performance of all student groups which could be used to identify areas for particular attention and to track the impact of changes on learner outcomes.

The evidence confirms that in addition to passing courses and achieving qualifications, students are achieving a variety of important transferable skills (such as research capability and critical thinking) and applied skills (such as massage and the cultivation and manufacturing of herbal products), which are highly relevant to their career goals. SPCNM's approach to learner achievement is underpinned by a strong focus on enhancing student well-being, although at present there is no formal mechanism for assessing effectiveness in this regard.

## 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**.

SPCNM has good evidence, gathered through surveys, consultation processes and professional and industry collaborations, of the high value of the Bachelor of Natural Medicine to learners and other stakeholders. Performance against TEC contractual targets has led to increased Student Achievement Component funding. The appointment of industry specialists and expert advisors to the degree advisory committee, academic board and board of trustees provides opportunities for SPCNM to maintain its understanding of stakeholder expectations.

A 2013 survey of employers shows that employers are very positive about the quality of the programme and the attributes, skills and knowledge of the graduates and their preparation for employment in the natural health industry. Graduate surveys conducted in 2013 and 2014 confirm that most SPCNM's graduates go on to work in the natural health industry. The majority are self-employed and/or working part-time as independent practitioners.<sup>3</sup> A smaller number gain employment with manufacturers and suppliers of herbal products. SPCNM's plans to follow up graduates two years after completion will enhance its knowledge of the medium-term outcomes for graduates.

SPCNM demonstrates a strong commitment to enhancing the well-being of its learners and the wider community. A good example is the recent consultation with community and iwi groups about the learning pathways in Rongoa Māori (traditional

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<sup>3</sup> The evaluators noted that student and graduate feedback suggests that many graduates intend to work in natural medicine in combination with other personal commitments and/or business interests

Māori medicine). The provider also offers short courses and has a fully functioning public clinic on site. Although SPCNM actively engages with its alumni, it currently does not have a strategy for evaluating its contribution in this regard.

SPCNM is using stakeholder feedback to identify areas for improvement to its programme to enhance valued outcomes. Recent examples include curriculum changes such as the introduction of an additional clinic course for third-year students and enhancements to the professional practice course. Future surveys will provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of these changes for graduate outcomes, although early indicators are positive. SPCNM is collaborating with other providers of natural health education and the New Zealand Association of Medical Herbalists to measure New Zealand natural health education against Australian standards. SPCNM's engagement in reciprocal external moderation activities with an Australian college is further evidence of its commitment to enhancing the relevance and credibility of its educational provision.

### 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 **Excellent**.

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

SPCNM is highly effective in ensuring programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders. Annual programme reviews reflect a significant level of regular activity focused on evaluation and improvement of the Bachelor of Natural Medicine – including engagement with a wide range of stakeholders – and draws from rich information gathered in consultation with students through SGID.

Comprehensive and effective consultation and analysis of student progress contributes to programme development and ongoing curriculum review. As a result, the degree reflects industry and community needs for a credible qualification in naturopathy, which includes science, research and professional practice. Information is gathered from a variety of sources, including analysis of student results, employer feedback and the small group instructional diagnostic process, and used in an ongoing way to refine the curriculum and to improve teaching and assessment practices. Examples of improvements include the introduction of a science prerequisite course (to ensure students are adequately prepared for degree study) and including reception and administrative duties in the clinical practice ('real-world' experience which is relevant to work as a practitioner).

SPCNM demonstrates a strong and effective focus on understanding and meeting student needs. The flexible nature of the programme design, particularly the ability to study online for the first two years of the degree, closely matches the needs and preferences of students, particularly those who reside outside Auckland or have other commitments. However, SPCNM understands the challenges of distance

study for some students. Lecturers monitor students' engagement with the course material on Moodle (the online learning platform), and endeavour to increase their participation in online fora. Attendance is encouraged at weekend workshops<sup>4</sup> at the Auckland campus (two per semester) which provide an opportunity to meet lecturers and fellow students (including on-campus students) and to seek additional assistance. SPCNM has recently made several changes to the workshop format, such as inviting guest speakers and offering a shared lunch, to improve the value of the event for students. The PTE has also recently begun analysis of the impact of attendance at these workshops on student retention and success.

SPCNM regularly collects feedback from students face-to-face and using an annual student satisfaction survey, which is analysed and contributes to planning and decision-making. During 2013, SPCNM invested significantly in enhancing information technology and library resources and services. Subsequent student feedback reports significantly increased levels of student satisfaction with these resources and related support services.

#### 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 **Good**.

Students enrolled at SPCNM benefit from highly effective teaching delivered by experienced and well-qualified individuals. Many of the teachers are also part-time natural health practitioners, and this contributes to students' confidence in the relevance and currency of the course material. Teaching is also informed by research, although this is still an area of development; some teachers are undertaking relevant postgraduate study.

Student feedback, gathered in a variety of ways, confirms that they are motivated and engaged with appropriate activities and resources, which provide them with varied opportunities to gain and apply theoretical knowledge. SPCNM reflects conscientiously on student feedback, and there is good evidence of its use to make improvements, such as changes to the Rongoa Māori course, and a variety of remedial actions to address concerns arising from unplanned staff turnover in one course earlier in 2014. The course outlines also provide evidence of changes made in response to student feedback, the effectiveness of which are then evaluated through further student feedback and monthly meetings of teaching staff where student progress is closely monitored.

SPCNM has a well-considered approach to assessment, ensuring that assessment is both rigorous and caters to a range of learning styles; students interviewed by

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<sup>4</sup> Attendance is optional at most workshops, but one or two are compulsory.

the evaluators described assessments as ‘challenging’ and reflective of the ‘science-based’ curriculum. Notably, these students already held degree qualifications gained elsewhere. SPCNM has established a highly effective process for internal moderation, which ensures a thorough review of all assessment activity (pre- and post-assessment) by all teaching staff, and has resulted in increased confidence in the quality of assessment practice and the validity of learning outcomes. SPCNM has reciprocal arrangements for external moderation with one Auckland and one Australian provider. These activities, together with the oversight of academic results by the PTE’s ratification committee and academic board, and progression through the degree, provide high levels of confidence in the consistency and rigour of assessment practices at SPCNM.

SPCNM is committed to supporting teachers to stay current with industry developments and improve their teaching and research skills through a range of professional development activities. These include in-house workshops on a range of topics, paying tuition fees for postgraduate study, and encouraging networking and participation in industry conferences. Teachers share good practice at staff meetings. Annual appraisals provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on student and collegial feedback and to identify personal and professional goals. In recent years SPCNM has assisted teachers to become more confident and capable in using Moodle, supporting online learning. Nonetheless, the evaluators noted that there were opportunities to further realise the full potential of online learning technologies in providing a more dynamic learning environment for the online learners.

While SPCNM is certainly encouraging individual teachers to reflect on feedback, the small group instructional diagnostic process is a rich source of information which currently is not analysed to identify trends or organisational professional development priorities. By providing leadership in focusing systematically on teaching practice and pedagogy, SPCNM management could further enhance teaching effectiveness.

## 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 **Excellent**.

SPCNM demonstrates a strong commitment to fostering the well-being of students and supporting their personal development and academic achievement. This includes a holistic approach to guidance and support which includes careful monitoring of student wellness, academic progress and the development of professional attributes. One example is the development of a four-stage process of learner support for students identified as at-risk, which involves increasing levels of support and mentoring depending on the individual student's needs. SPCNM has also invested in staffing and resources to provide excellent guidance and support, such as the library and learning services. The involvement of the librarian in regular academic committee meetings provides a useful opportunity for tracking the impact of learning services interventions on individual students' progress.

Students at SPCNM report their satisfaction with the level of guidance and support available to them. Publications, such as the prospectus, student handbook and assessment guide, are comprehensive and updated regularly. All students receive individual study advice prior to enrolment and an orientation programme targeted to their chosen delivery mode. The online orientation includes an introduction to Moodle as well as crucial information on SPCNM. Students interviewed by the evaluators confirmed that staff respond promptly to questions and that they receive good learning support. Generally, the weekend workshops are helpful for the online learners, and provide welcome opportunities to network with other students. A student representative system is in place, which enables issues to be raised with management each month, and students report that they feel that their views and concerns are heard and responded to appropriately. These processes, together with strong evidence that all staff are very approachable and responsive to learners, provide a high level of confidence in the levels of guidance and support available for SPCNM students.

SPCNM is fully compliant with all requirements of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. Relatively informal systems are in place, which is adequate at present as there are only a very small number of international student enrolments each year. The sole international student on campus at the time of the EER held existing qualifications in natural medicine, and spoke favourably about the quality of the support provided and the level of the programme. SPCNM had offered appropriate recognition of prior learning for this student, the processes for which were clearly recorded through the academic approvals committee.

## 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 **Excellent**.

SPCNM is a small, responsive provider with a clear vision, appropriate governance and management structures, and a positive and collegial culture. SPCNM has established highly effective and comprehensive management, academic and administrative procedures to support teaching and learning and ensure the provision of high-quality learner support. The custom-built facilities are attractive and fit-for-purpose. Planning and investment decisions support SPCNM's focus on real-world learning and enhancing student well-being. Examples include recent improvements to clinical facilities and increased clinical practice in year three of the degree, the redevelopment of a study and relaxation space (available 24 hours a day), and the library upgrade.

The organisation's management is effective and efficient and well supported by a number of external advisors, who contribute to key committees and the board of trustees. A new approach to strategic planning is being introduced, involving the newly appointed board of trustees which, it is hoped, will bring a greater alignment between the board, management and membership of the incorporated society. Increasing the quantity and quality of research is a major priority for SPCNM, and a senior management role with responsibility for research and clinical leadership was created in 2013. A programme is under way to support staff and foster research activity, and progress, which is regularly reported to the academic board and board of trustees, is deemed satisfactory by NZQA.<sup>5</sup> A new staff appointment and strategy for further strengthening Māori and Pasifika participation and achievement are also a result of self-assessment.

Self-assessment at SPCNM is systematic and very thorough, involves staff at all levels of the organisation, and is based on valid information gathered from a variety of sources. The annual programme reports provide a very useful summary of self-assessment activity. There are some opportunities for further analysis of data, such as developing a greater understanding of reasons for variations in retention and outcomes between student cohorts, which will help to target improvements. While there is good evidence that SPCNM is using information to make meaningful and worthwhile changes, a greater focus on evaluating the impact of changes will further enhance educational performance.

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<sup>5</sup> NZQA degree monitor's report, 2014

## 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 **Excellent**.

### 2.2 Focus area: Bachelor of Natural Medicine (Level 7)

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

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

### 2.3 Focus area: Online learning

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

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

# Recommendations

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



# Appendix

## Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

*Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

*In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

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

*This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.*

*The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.*

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

*External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website ([www.nzqa.govt.nz](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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