



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Royal Business College

Date of report: 22 June 2010

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Purpose of this Report

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

Brief description of TEO

Location: Hereford Street, Christchurch
Federal Street, Auckland

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: 200 international students, 24 staff

Sites: Christchurch and Auckland

The Royal Business College (RBC) was opened in Christchurch in 1996. At that time it was known as the Royal English College, teaching English as a foreign language to international students. Since 2002 RBC has offered courses in Business, Horticulture, and Information Technology. It operates from two inner-city campuses, with the head office in Christchurch and the second campus in Auckland. RBC provides education to international students from India, mainland China, Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, and Pakistan.

RBC seeks to inspire students and cultivate their intellectual and personal well-being as they study, and to help them find meaningful employment on completion of their course. Many students go on to work in a broad range of hospitality and horticultural businesses in Canterbury, Auckland, and the Bay of Plenty.

The managing director of RBC is closely involved with the day-to-day operation of both campuses and is active in community organisations and business associations, which give him a national and international profile.

Courses offered in 2010 are:

- National Diploma in Business (Levels 5 and 6)
- National Diploma in Computing (Levels 5 and 6)
- National Certificate in Horticulture (Level 4)
- RBC Diploma in Horticulture (Level 5)
- RBC Diploma in Business (Marketing) (Level 7)
- National Diploma in Tourism (Level 5)

- English programme.

RBC was previously quality assured by NZQA in 2008 under the audit system then in operation. The college met the relevant NZQA requirements and those of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of **Royal Business College**.

Key reasons for this include the following.

- Students enrol to achieve unit standards and qualifications in Business, Horticulture, and Information Technology. Students are seeking and receive practical skills and preparation to be able to work in the New Zealand workplace.
- The 2009 evaluations showed that 90 per cent of the students were satisfied with their course of study.
- In 2009, 90 per cent of students achieved their qualification. This is well above the sector benchmarks.
- Students are assessed regularly throughout their course of study. Accurate records of feedback are given and final results are kept.
- All issues, academic or personal, are dealt with promptly and appropriately.
- Students reported consistently high levels of satisfaction with course content, tutor preparation, presentation, and the facilities and resources provided for their use.
- Students reported that staff were available to address any academic issues outside regular class hours, including helping students with issues that arose in their workplaces after they had graduated and gained employment.
- Staff mentioned the quality, responsiveness, and availability of the directors of studies to address issues and concerns, include staff in decision-making, and provide guidance and support.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Royal Business College**

Key reasons for this include the following.

- The college's self-assessment was well informed. It reflected the college's current and planned future activities and the importance of learning outcomes for students.
- The processes and procedures outlined in the organisation's self-review document were carried out in practice and enabled staff to monitor and review their educational effectiveness.
- Staff knew about self-review and received training in the evaluative process, although the understanding of how the evaluative approach might inform an individual's teaching practice and effectiveness was not always apparent.

- Staff showed commitment to the business and valued the working environment where discussion and support occurred on a regular basis.
- Formal and informal review occurs regularly, allowing each campus to be responsive to student and staff needs.
- The college understands the interdependence of the educational, social, cultural, and personal outcomes for students. This focus was confirmed by students who consistently reported positive experiences at the college.
- The advisory board works with the college to assist with future decision-making and strategic initiatives and to contribute to ongoing improvement.
- Contact with past graduates occurs naturally as a result of the family atmosphere fostered at RBC. This keeps students connected with RBC staff and returning to visit regularly.
- RBC's employment of outside expertise to explain self-review has been useful during the transition to an evaluative approach to quality assurance.
- Although ongoing achievement data on students is kept, there are still opportunities for greater comparative analysis at an organisational level.

TEO response

Royal Business College has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Basis for External Evaluation and Review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

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).

Findings

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

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of Royal Business College included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance management, and strategy
- Student support, including international students.

The programmes chosen for evaluation were:

- Diploma in Horticulture (Level 5)
- National Diploma in Business (Level 6).

The Diploma in Horticulture includes theory and practical components. Worksite placements with employers provide access to feedback from external stakeholders. The business course represents an area that RBC would like to promote to international markets.

Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

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**.

Context

RBC provides a comfortable, welcoming physical environment at both of its inner-city campuses. The colleges provide free broadband internet use, state-of-the-art computer rooms, and access to relevant textbooks for students and staff.

Explanation

Both students and staff reported high levels of satisfaction with students' academic progress. In 2009, 90 per cent of students completed their qualification; this is above sector benchmarks. These achievement rates are a result of students being given clear guidelines and regular feedback in relation to attendance, classroom behaviour, and academic progress. Careful tracking of academic progress is maintained, with individual student progress being reviewed regularly against the timetable for programme completion. Strong support and encouragement is offered to all students, with extra support available for students who fall behind. Staff know students well and every effort is made to accommodate genuine absence with individual tuition or re-sit opportunities.

The rapport and respect between staff and students encourage honest and open discussion of issues affecting academic performance. Many students at RBC have degree-level qualifications from their home countries. They are mature, discerning consumers of education and set high standards for themselves and their educators.

There are three course surveys completed by students: at six weeks, mid-course, and end-of-course. The first survey allows the college to identify students who are unsettled and require extra support; the second helps to identify the students who are falling behind with the course work; and the final survey is an opportunity to capture information about the overall experience the student has had at RBC. Surveying students provides an opportunity to check that the organisation's systems, such as the orientation process, have worked as intended. They also provide feedback to tutors about the content of their programmes and effectiveness of their teaching practice. Horticulture students also evaluate their work experience.

Students consistently reported that their tutors were responsive to their needs, easy to talk to, and spent extra time with them if they were falling behind in their course work. Students also said they felt individually respected and nurtured by all the staff at RBC.

They also commented that many staff had doctorate-level qualifications and relevant teaching experience. In addition, they respected the industry knowledge of the tutors and were confident they were being taught by well-qualified industry specialists.

RBC understands its students well. The college is well informed about government policy that may impact on students' future study and employment options in New Zealand, such as immigration requirements for international students.

RBC maintains detailed, ongoing achievement data for each individual student on course satisfaction and qualification completion. Greater comparative analysis and reflection on student completion and achievement at an organisational level (over time, across cohorts and campuses) could identify opportunities for further improvement.

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**.

Context

RBC has a close and mutually beneficial relationship with its key stakeholders, particularly the industry stakeholders with whom students gain their horticultural work experience. Small numbers of graduates continue on to further study at other institutions, including universities, but most are seeking to work in New Zealand, either short-term or to gain residency.

Explanation

The close association between RBC and its horticulture employers ensures that the curriculum is current and reflects industry trends. This enables the students to gain relevant work experience to assist their future employment options. Many students are offered employment by their work experience employers. The motivation and calibre of students at RBC impressed the evaluation team and was acknowledged by RBC as playing an important part in the success of the students. Students and staff also commented that the college ensures students are work-ready by providing opportunities to experience the New Zealand way of life and work culture. Graduates are surveyed about four months after course completion. This helps the college and students stay connected and contributes to building the college's networks.

The managing director of RBC is an accomplished businessman with well-established networks which allow him to provide students with access to employment opportunities with local businesses. Horticulture employers are surveyed regularly for feedback about students' subject knowledge, preparedness for work, and ability to work with others. Employers all reported high levels of satisfaction with students in relation to these factors.

In addition, staff from RBC have visited Tauranga and Te Puke to see how the horticulture students are progressing with their work experience. RBC is also a sponsor of the Young Horticulturist of the Year award. This shows commitment and involvement with the wider horticultural community. Another example of the college's external focus is the link formed with Ngai Tahu concerning an aquaculture initiative in Canterbury. The evaluation team met the Ngai Tahu representatives and was impressed with the respect and shared vision between them and the managing director at RBC.

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 **Good**.

Context

Horticulture students are able to gain hands-on, practical experience at RBC's rural blocks in Christchurch and Auckland and community sites in Auckland. Business students have access to local business people who visit the campus to discuss how their organisations function. Staff at both campuses are involved in their local communities through service clubs or church associations.

Explanation

Students noted that the teaching they received was practical and relevant and prepared them well for work experience. The classroom atmosphere promoted interaction between students and with the tutor. Students enjoyed this as it made the learning fun and was different from the learning environment they were familiar with in their home countries. They commented that they were able to learn from each other's experiences as well as from the tutor.

Students said the college was well resourced with modern equipment and facilities. They also said the college was responsive to student feedback, for example by organising a graduation ceremony at the students' request. The combination of excellent resources and responding to their feedback made students feel valued and helped them to learn effectively and efficiently.

Horticulture employers surveyed by RBC in both Auckland and Christchurch mentioned the shortage of suitable horticulture trainees. Several local tertiary providers in both cities no longer offer training in horticulture and this is a niche that RBC, with the support of the managing director, is well positioned to fill. Two positive initiatives planned for 2010 are the development of a graduate profile and online surveys of international stakeholders. In addition, it was recognised by RBC that it is important to feed back to stakeholders any changes made in response to their feedback.

RBC works with local tertiary organisations to provide pathways for its graduates and to explore new developments. For example, RBC is currently in discussion with Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) regarding pathways for RBC students to cross-credit or further their higher education at CPIT. The courses involved are: business and computing on the National Qualification Framework levels 5 and 6; tourism and carpentry courses; and a joint project in aquaculture where the two organisations would share the leadership, development, costs, and delivery involved in this programme, targeted primarily at Māori youth.

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**.

Context

The management of RBC gives priority to recruiting staff with high-level academic qualifications, and provides ongoing management of staff through the directors of studies who ensure teaching programmes are well organised. At annual appraisals a professional development plan is developed for each staff member. Tutors are encouraged to work towards obtaining a formal qualification in teaching. Staff at both campuses are well qualified academically; some have extensive teaching experience and some hold formal teaching qualifications.

Explanation

Student surveys and interviews with teachers indicate high levels of satisfaction with the delivery of the courses. Students said tutors were well prepared, knowledgeable, responsive to individual student needs, and available to give extra tuition if required. Most teachers interviewed understood the importance of the teacher-student relationship and establishing a classroom atmosphere conducive to inquiry and interaction.

The evaluators noted the care taken to balance the theoretical and practical aspects of programme content. This was particularly evident in the Diploma in Horticulture programme where students on the farm might be introduced to a theoretical concept and then practise it soon after.

Teacher effectiveness is also helped by staff listening to student feedback and changing their approach as a result. For example, when some students explained they could not understand their tutor easily, this feedback was given to the staff member and she adapted her teaching delivery appropriately. Students observed at the Auckland campus in particular were engaged, focussed, and enjoying learning.

The diverse backgrounds of the student population at RBC are used by the teachers to engage students and enrich the classroom experience. Teachers' classroom practice is observed each semester by the directors of studies and structured feedback is provided. Student results and qualification completion rates are good at both campuses, indicating that effective teaching and learning is occurring.

However, although the evaluation team noted that the staff understood the importance of the evaluative approach and that they had attended training with external contractors, an understanding of how the evaluative approach might inform an individual's teaching practice and effectiveness was not always apparent. There was evidence of small-scale, ad hoc improvements, such as an individual teacher modifying their teaching style after feedback from students, but there was less evidence provided of systematic improvements as a result of evaluative processes. There was also no evidence of a strong community of practice of teachers which could foster an evaluative and improvement focus.

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 **Good**.

Context

Students are provided with comprehensive study information and advice, such as information about welfare and support services in Christchurch and Auckland, course fees, and methods of assessment and re-assessment. Students have orientation trips around the respective cities, so they become familiar with the location of banks, supermarkets, and other services such as transport.

Explanation

Comprehensive student advice begins with the first contact prior to enrolment, continues throughout the course of study, and is available after graduation when the student is employed. Students were impressed that the staff took time to assist students with a variety of different queries, from accommodation to classwork. They consistently reported that the learning environment was inclusive and that there were no barriers to learning. RBC views its students as part of the “RBC family” and provides comprehensive ongoing support for all students who have studied at the college. The college also provides Chinese, Korean, and Japanese-language counsellors as well as English-language counsellors.

Where tutors identify ongoing English language difficulties the student is referred to the managing director who initiates a plan with the RBC English language tutors, the course tutors, and the students to provide course-specific English language assistance.

The directors of studies interview all new students to discuss their course of study and to help them establish study goals. All students’ progress is tracked monthly and reports are provided to the managing director each term. The managing director also visits classes regularly, interviews all students every three months, and helps ex-graduates with business plans. He conducts exit interviews where the students complete exit questionnaires and readily shares his advice about “doing business in New Zealand”.

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

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

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

Context

The managing director of RBC is the sole shareholder. He knows what is happening in his college at all times. He has built a successful business over 14 years and understands that word-of-mouth recommendations account for a significant proportion of enrolments. Academic accountability is ensured by the tutorial staff reporting to the directors of studies at their respective campuses. The directors report directly to the managing director.

Explanation

RBC annually reviews its financial accounts, capital expenditure budget, and current courses and measures its performance against its goals. The managing director supports students' success by generous provision of teaching resources and a well-stocked library, with lending facilities for both students and teachers. Both campuses have recently moved to new premises and the Christchurch campus has a newly equipped computer suite. RBC has also invested in rural blocks where horticulture students get hands-on, practical experience. The evaluation team sighted RBC's marketing and business plan which showed a comprehensive approach to future planning and confirmed confidence in the resilience of the organisation.

RBC has responded positively to the self-review process initiated by NZQA. It has reviewed its quality management system (QMS) and overlaid it with a quality improvement programme (QIP). The intention of the QIP is to review various parts of the QMS on an annual cycle, with all parts of the business being reviewed over a three-year cycle. Year one of the first cycle was completed in 2009. In addition, an audit of specific aspects of the QMS will be independently reviewed over a three-year period. A number of surveys, meetings, and forums with students, staff, and industry have informed, and will continue to inform, the managing director's report. The findings from the annual review and independent audit will be reported to the managing director who in turn reports to the advisory board in July and December each year. This report informs the next year's QIP.

The 2010 QIP for the Diploma in Horticulture shows a comprehensive checklist of the activities required to be undertaken by the programme leader, culminating in an action plan for the 2011 academic year, based on the 2010 programme review and self-review. The 2009 programme review and self-review cycles have already occurred and have informed the 2010 process.

Other current management initiatives include standardising templates across campuses to ensure uniformity and more reliable comparison of, for example, student, staff, and employer survey data, using technology such as Skype for the directors of studies to communicate easily on a daily basis.

When RBC realised it did not have the internal expertise to prepare the college for external evaluation and review it employed external contractors. This is good business practice at this time of transition from the previous quality assurance system focussed on audit to the current external evaluation and review. However, the evaluation team noted that while the management team understood the importance of working with the evaluative approach and had useful processes and procedures in place (staff had been trained recently by the external contractors), the relationship between governance and management and self-assessment, and consequent educational achievement was not fully appreciated at this time.

Governance and management's ability to provide an atmosphere where all staff understand, contribute to, and value the advantages of self-review for their own and the organisation's practice, will allow RBC to fully develop confidence in the ability of its staff members to embed the evaluative approach inside RBC. As this capability increases, RBC will be able to increasingly draw on internal expertise to meet its needs.

Part 2: Performance in focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

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

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

Refer section 1.6.

2.2 Focus area: International students

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

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

Refer sections 1.1-1.6.

2.3 Focus area: Diploma in Horticulture (Level 5)

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

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

Refer sections 1.1-1.6.

2.4 Focus area: National Diploma in Business (Level 6)

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

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

Refer sections 1.1-1.6.

Statements of Confidence

The statements of confidence are derived from the findings within and across the focus areas. A four-step scale is used: highly confident, confident, not yet confident, not confident.

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Royal Business College

- The evaluation team sighted documentation and observed behaviour that showed coherence in policy, record-keeping, staff and student comments, and academic achievement.
- Students make significant gains in academic, social, cultural, and personal development.
- Feedback from internal and external stakeholders attests to the value of the learning acquired at RBC.
- Students commented that teachers are well qualified, experienced, and well resourced.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Royal Business College

- Staff and management are able to describe what they do, or plan to do, to review their organisational programmes, track student progress, and review policies and procedures.
- There is evidence of coherent policy-making, accurate documentation of practice and processes, and good record-keeping.
- Staff appreciate the importance of understanding the self-review process.
- Documentation and processes are strong at RBC. All employees are very committed and responsive to individual students.
- Evidence analysed and improvements shown from the first QIP cycle and RBC's ability to build greater internal capacity and capability in self-review will help embed a culture of organisational reflective practice.

Further Actions and Recommendations

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's regular scheduling policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

Recommendations

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

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