

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Universal College of Learning (UCOL)

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 10 October 2012

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review	4
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	6
Summary of Results	7
Findings	10
Recommendations	24
Appendix	25

MoE Number: 6009
NZQA Reference: C06145
Date of EER visit: 21-25 November 2011

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

Location:	Head Office, Corner King and Princess Sts, Palmerston North
Type:	Polytechnic
First registered:	1998
Number of students:	Domestic: 3,198 In 2010, 27 per cent of UCOL students identified as Māori and 5 per cent identified as Pasifika. International: 147 (2010)
Number of staff:	211 full-time equivalents (2010)
Sites:	Whanganui Universal College of Learning (UCOL): 16 Rutland Street, Whanganui Wairarapa UCOL: 143-159 Chapel Street, Masterton
Distinctive characteristics:	The Masterton and Whanganui campuses were added to UCOL with the incorporation of the Wairarapa Regional Polytechnic in 2001 and the Whanganui Regional Community Polytechnic in 2002. UCOL's catchment covers a large geographic area of the North Island, including the regions of Manawatu, Wairarapa, and Whanganui. UCOL is a multi-region, multi-campus provider.

Recent significant changes: Owing to a recent decision taken by UCOL Council, a number of programmes at Whanganui and Palmerston North are relocating to temporary premises to allow earthquake strengthening work. In Whanganui this shift coincides with Project Prospective, a strategic review of the arts programmes.

Previous quality assurance history: At the Academic Audit in 2008, the reviewing panel made 29 recommendations, seven of which were in relation to the Research Standard. At the ITPQ Mid Term Quality Review, in late 2009, the conservative number of research-active staff was also noted.

Since 2008, the majority of UCOL's externally moderated unit standards have met national external moderation requirements.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Programmes chosen were drawn from a number of levels, from certificates to degrees, being representative of UCOL's faculties and campuses, retention and completion characteristics and, overall, representing a significant proportion of the polytechnic's equivalent full-time students (EFTS).

(See table over page for breakdown of programmes by EFTS and retention and completion rates.)

Faculty	Programme	Campus/ Location	Project Transform ¹	2010 data		
				No. of EFTS	Retention %	Course completion %
Faculty of Health Science	Bachelor of Nursing (Level 7)	Palmerston North, Whanganui, and Masterton		514.65	80	88
	Certificate in Exercise and Sport Performance (Level 4)	Palmerston North, Whanganui, and Masterton	Yes	65	43	56
	Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (Level 6)	Palmerston North		65	41	58
Faculty of Trades and Technology	Certificate in Carpentry (Level 4)	Palmerston North and Masterton	Yes	80.9	39	39
	Certificate in Automotive Panel and Paint (Level 3)	Palmerston North	Yes	43	33	35
Faculty of Whanganui	Bachelor of Fine Arts (Level 7)	Whanganui		58	86	94
Faculty of Humanities and Business	National Certificate in Computing (Level 3)	Online		59	33	28

In addition to these programme focus areas, the mandatory focus areas of governance, management, and strategy, and achievement and support for international students also formed part of the external evaluation and review.

¹ Project Transform is a cross-organisation programme to address the organisation's performance in terms of student achievement.

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 external evaluation and review was conducted by a lead evaluator and three external evaluators over a five-day period (21-25 November 2011). For each programme focus area, a series of discussions was conducted with programme management, academic staff, students, and external stakeholders. The evaluation team visited the Whanganui and Masterton campuses and interviewed staff and students. Meetings were also held with international student support staff and international students and the student association representatives.

For the governance, management, and strategy focus area, meetings were held with the chief executive, the senior leadership team, the academic board, and the chair of Council. Documentation reviewed included the self-assessment reports from the programme focus areas, key strategy and research documents, student and graduate surveys, and reports to the academic board and Council.

Universal College of Learning has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Universal College of Learning (UCOL)**.

On being appointed in early 2010, UCOL's Council developed five new goals² as part of its strategic framework, with student achievement being a strong focus. This was Council's response to the Tertiary Education Commission requiring improvements in student achievement rates and linking funding to performance in this area. To support the aim to lift achievement rates, Project Transform was implemented. Strategies in this project include introducing "conversations" at enrolment to ensure students are enrolled in programmes appropriate to their academic experience, and using a Credit Achievement Management System (CAMS) to track credit achievement at the learner, class, programme, and faculty levels, enabling early intervention. It is principally this targeted approach, and the subsequent steady improvements in course completions over 2010 and 2011, that has led to the evaluation team being confident in the educational performance of UCOL.

Successful course completions improved from 56 per cent in 2009 to 62 per cent in 2010. Five of the seven programme focus areas evaluated as part of the external evaluation and review show steady increases in course achievement continuing into 2011. Progress is most marked in those focus areas that were part of the targeted resourcing through Project Transform. Achievement for Māori students is lower generally across UCOL, although there are notable exceptions in some programmes. Project Transform has targeted support for Māori students through the Raukura initiative, which supports learners and tutors with mentors or Kaitiaki Ākonga. Although early indications are that this support has had a positive impact, there is little evidence that UCOL has successfully implemented a whole-of-organisation strategy to lift achievement for Māori. While course completions for Māori have improved since 2009, the gap in achievement rates between Māori and non-Māori has remained the same.

Being positioned across a number of communities, campuses, iwi, and regions makes engagement with external stakeholders challenging. Some programmes, such as the Bachelor of Nursing, have strong links to their various stakeholder groups. Not only do these relationships inform the programme's development, but UCOL takes an influencing role in regional health sector workforce development. These strong stakeholder relationships were not consistent across the other focus areas, and opportunities for UCOL to bring industry representatives together are being missed. Furthermore, while there is evidence of graduates moving into

² These goals include: improving educational outcomes, revenue diversification, improving Māori educational outcomes, organisational capability/sustainability, and specialisation.

employment supported by relevant qualifications, in a number of programme areas the evidence gathered is not systematic enough to clearly establish value for learners, industry, and the wider community.

The commitment of staff to their students was noted across the three campuses, and there are a number of examples of innovative teaching practice enhancing learning. Consistency of delivery and assessment is mostly managed well across the three campuses, although some programmes lack a systematic approach to ensure that good teaching practice is shared. Students and staff at Masterton and Whanganui, while connected to the wider UCOL community, feel like “poor cousins” at times because of a lag in some services.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Universal College of Learning (UCOL)**.

UCOL has systematic programme reviews which incorporate an evaluative framework into the annual reports of programme managers. The reflections in these reports, while genuine and transparent, show a range of understanding about using data to understand and improve performance. While a number of focus areas show a good analysis of student achievement data and stakeholder feedback, others lack in-depth, useful analysis.

The publication of tertiary education organisations’ student achievement data, and the linking of funding to this performance, prompted UCOL to reflect on where it could most effectively make improvements. Project Transform has emerged as the key vehicle for planned initiatives aimed at increasing successful course completions. An evaluation is being planned to ascertain the effectiveness of the various strategies implemented under the project.

Student evaluations and satisfaction surveys are conducted routinely, although it is not always clear how the issues are analysed. There are reporting lines from programmes to faculty boards of studies and standing committees, to the academic board and, in the case of Project Transform, directly to Council. The UCOL management team has a good understanding of using data to inform improvements. This is not as apparent at the programme and tutor level.

UCOL understands some of the needs of its key stakeholders well. The embedding of literacy and numeracy into programmes at levels 1-4 is an example of this. However, there is not a systematic approach to a comprehensive assessment of stakeholder perceptions, needs, and values. Engagement with industry is variable and driven at the programme level. For example, as noted above, the Bachelor of Nursing team has consulted widely with key stakeholders and uses the feedback to inform programme improvements. This is not as apparent in other programmes, including the Bachelor of Fine Arts, the Certificate in Exercise and Sport Performance, and the Certificate in Carpentry. Efforts are being made to engage

effectively with Māori, with some relationships with iwi being well established, although the impact of this engagement on Māori learners is still unclear.

Findings³

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Learner achievement at UCOL has been improving steadily since 2009. Overall, in 2009 successful course completions were at 56 per cent, increasing to 62 per cent in 2010. Initial indications are that course completions will improve further for 2011. Qualification completions increased from 45 per cent in 2009 to 51 per cent in 2010.

Programmes targeted for resources through Project Transform have shown remarkable increases in course completions. For example, in the Certificate in Automotive Panel and Paint course, completions in 2010 were 35 per cent, and this has improved to 62 per cent in 2011. The Certificate in Exercise and Sport has increased its course completion rate from a low of 45 per cent in 2009 to 67 per cent for 2011, while the Certificate in Carpentry has improved from a low of 39 per cent in 2010 to 59 per cent for 2011.

The evaluation team accept that these improvements have come about through the implementation of a number of key initiatives, in particular improved enrolment management which has ensured that students are enrolled in programmes where they stand a good chance of success. Other initiatives include better monitoring of attendance to ensure students do not fall too far behind in assessment work, and ensuring students are better prepared for their first assessments. An improved academic management process has also enabled the early withdrawal of students who enrol but never attend. It is unclear to what extent the increase in achievement can be attributed to managing entry. In some programmes, this does seem to be the case to a large extent; in others, less so.

While this improved achievement is good, there is still a targeted effort required to lift achievement still further. Māori continue to achieve at a lower rate than other students and this gap in achievement has not narrowed. In some programmes, the gap in achievement rates is as wide as 20 per cent between Māori and all students. There are one or two notable exceptions, including the Bachelor of Nursing, where the achievement of Māori students is equivalent to that of non-Māori. UCOL benchmarks lower than other institutes of technology and polytechnics, and this can only partly be explained by high numbers of learners entering the institution with low or no previous qualifications.

Achievement is being carefully and continuously tracked across the organisation, supported by CAMS. All programmes are provided with a dashboard which

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

outlines successful course completion across time and a breakdown of the achievement by ethnicity and highest formal school qualification. Some programmes are making good use of this information. The key analysis and use of this data and CAMS is generally occurring at the senior management level. Achievement is being reported variously through the faculty boards of studies to academic board and then to Council, and through Project Transform directly to Council. While programmes report on their achievement rates, the analysis and interpretation of that data in their self-assessment reports is at times quite weak.

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 **Good**.

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

UCOL has taken some steps to understand the value of outcomes for learners and other key stakeholders. A short survey conducted at the 2010 graduation indicates that 79 per cent of survey participants were either in work or in further study. Of those in work, 57 per cent were in employment related to their qualification. These findings appear to be supported by another graduate survey conducted in 2011 in combination with six other regional polytechnics. This showed that 70 per cent of UCOL respondents are either employed or self-employed, with 42 per cent claiming they are using the skills and knowledge learned at UCOL “to a large extent”. In a number of the programme focus areas, staff maintained links with graduates and were able to demonstrate that a significant number had moved to relevant employment.

A UCOL-wide survey of employers stressed the need for UCOL graduates to have generic, work-ready skills, and some programmes have taken this on board and have found useful ways to give students realistic work experience. However, how much value graduates bring to their respective industries does not seem to be well understood. Advisory boards seem to have outlived their usefulness for many programmes, and yet effective alternative methods for systematically engaging with industry have not been explored. In some of the focus area programmes, industry stakeholders said they would welcome greater opportunities to engage with UCOL to discuss wider industry developments. This would also provide an opportunity for industry input into programme design, review, and improvements.

A notable exception is the Bachelor of Nursing, where there are strong links with health providers in the region. For example, a shift to 24/7 clinical practice hours has been popular with district health board educators, making the clinical practice more realistically mirror the realities of working as a nurse. The programme has a good understanding of where graduates go and has consulted widely to inform programme developments.

A third of UCOL students enrol in programmes that are at levels 1-4, and these often lead to higher-level study. In 2010, progression to higher-level study was taken up by 28 per cent of these learners. Quantitative data may be available, and anecdotal information may indicate that some of these pathways work effectively. However, there is no systematic analysis of how well students who take up these pathways achieve in higher levels of study, and so the value of the learning in these programmes is not well understood.

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 **Adequate**.

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

UCOL's catchment covers an extensive geographical area, and its campuses are based in three distinctive urban communities. There are a number of iwi within the districts, all with different priorities and needs. Identifying and responding well to the needs of this diverse range of stakeholders is a complex task, requiring a mix of strategies and careful prioritising. Project Transform and the new strategic direction set by Council are aimed at better matching the needs of UCOL learners.

The new enrolment management system and the use of interviews to identify learners' needs prior to enrolling them on a programme have resulted in better matching of students to programmes. Programmes reported that after their interview, a number of learners chose to enrol in courses that were a better match with their prior experience or vocational interests.

The vocational programmes reviewed by the evaluation team showed an increasing readiness to replicate the work environment as much as possible to ensure the theory is taught alongside the practice. For example, the Certificate in Carpentry students are involved in building a house and renovating kindergartens, presenting photographic evidence of their achievement. This hands-on approach to teaching is a better match with the skills of learners in the programme. The use of a spray booth similar to that used in the trade by the automotive panel and paint programme is another example of teaching activities matching the needs of learners and industry.

Māori learners' needs are not as well met, indicated by the significantly lower achievement rate. While there have been a number of previous strategies to address this, they do not appear to have gained significant traction. However, the organisation is still working to understand and match the needs of Māori. The Raukura programme is supporting Māori learners and their tutors in a number of programmes. The "indigenisation of the curriculum" project is a potential response and is part of the most recent Māori strategy document, Te Waka Hourua. The faculty of health science has also recently employed an academic leader for Māori to support a review of cultural competencies and to look at creative ways to support

the teaching and learning of Māori learners. These recent initiatives appear to have made possible gains for learners in some programmes.

The programmes reviewed as part of the evaluation had different mechanisms in place to understand their industry needs. While this was well done in some disciplines, for example the Certificate in Automotive, in others it was patchy and lacking a strategic approach. As one stakeholder indicated, “the longer you are off the tools, the less well prepared your trainees will be”. This has the potential to result in training not matching industry needs as effectively as it might. Most programme self-assessment reviews had identified this as a gap.

The organisation has taken a range of approaches to engage with key stakeholder groups and canvass their views. Some of these are at the programme level and others are at the level of senior management. While Project Transform is an important initiative, it is internally focused. UCOL did not appear to have a strategic, organisation-wide approach to engaging external stakeholders to bring these different perspectives together to inform planning and improvements.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

The 2010 UCOL Teaching and Learning five-year strategic plan states plainly:

“We have to be clear that not enough students at UCOL are succeeding in their study...This strategic plan intends to convey a sense of urgency about our need to change, to provide learning environments that engage our students, that offer excellent programmes and use technology to enable all kinds of learners to engage”.

The strategic plan outlined seven strategies, many of which have been incorporated in Project Transform. As a result, explicit literacy and numeracy outcomes are now included in all programmes from levels 1-4. A significant number of staff have completed or are completing the National Certificate in Adult Literacy Education (Vocational) (Level 4). The evaluation team heard that this professional development has been of value in supporting tutors to engage learners more effectively, although a wider analysis of effectiveness was not evident.

Another key strategy involves the use of technology to engage learners. Research reflecting on teaching practice is encouraged and supported through the Ako Aotearoa hub being located on campus. This focus on teaching and the sense of urgency to improve is to be commended. There is evidence that the plan has gained traction across the organisation, and innovative teaching and learning strategies have been adopted by a number of programmes, with Academic Improvement Committee forums reflecting on teaching and learning outcomes.

A survey for the assessment of tutor proficiency in the use of technology was conducted and “champions” were appointed to promote the use of technology to engage learners. How effective these champions have been is unclear. Some focus area programmes are effectively using UCOL’s e-learning system to engage students in their learning, while others are either using it ineffectively or not at all.

The organisation has developed a rubric with clear criteria for quality teaching. This tool should enable programmes to better determine the effectiveness of the teaching. Currently, conclusions are drawn from a range of evidence, some of it not well substantiated. For example, there is a lack of consistency across the focus areas in using approaches such as tutor observations, peer-marking, peer-tutoring, co-marking, and pre- and post-moderating across campuses

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

Guidance and support for students is one area that has improved over the past 18 months, particularly through Project Transform. The conversations that have been implemented as part of enrolment ensure that students are being given good information to guide their programme choices. The Student Experience Team (student support) has reconfigured the way it works, applying the targeted programmes to give learning support to students in the classrooms where it is needed. Similar mentoring and academic support is provided for students through Raukura and the Kaitiaki Ākonga. This reaching out of student support into the classrooms has not only provided support for students but has encouraged tutors to notice where their delivery is too challenging or not inclusive.

The evidence suggests that tutors and students mostly relate well, and the evaluation team heard examples of tutors providing high levels of support for the students.

While it is inevitable that the services provided at the smaller campuses (Whanganui and Masterton) will not be as extensive as at the main centres, these students were frustrated by the delays in borrowing texts and resolving IT issues.

Support for the small but increasing number of international students is inconsistent. While there is an orientation which introduces students to their new study and living environment, this was not provided for all international students. This has resulted in some students arriving at class with no understanding of the campus. While there are international student support staff who work hard to ensure students have a positive experience, not all international students were aware of the services offered. International students in programmes with significant numbers of other internationals seem to be effectively supported. Students in other programmes are at times left feeling isolated.

The sharing of information between the different teams who support students is improving, particularly for those involved with Project Transform. An evaluation is being commissioned to review the effectiveness of the student support mechanisms and their link to improving student achievement.

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

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

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

UCOL is in a strong position financially, being placed in the low risk band under the key performance indicators set by the Tertiary Education Commission. Careful stewardship of resources has resulted in funding being available for the necessary earthquake strengthening work required in some key buildings.

The Government policy decision to link funding to performance has the potential to put income at risk. It was this increased focus on student achievement, and linking it to funding, that prompted the new Council to set a new direction for UCOL, with a strong focus on improving student achievement. To accelerate this process, funding was allocated to Project Transform and the initiatives that underpin it. This dedicated resource for improving teaching and learning and support for students is a significant element in the success of the project. The Council and the senior leadership team are well aware of the challenge to ensure that the initiatives that have been shown to improve student achievement in the currently dedicated programmes are sustained and extended beyond these targeted areas.

The impact of Project Transform cannot be underestimated. The outcomes from the project are being carefully monitored and evaluated, with direct reports to Council. The communication flows and theory of change are well mapped out for this project. However, the lines of reporting for the other activities of the organisation are not as clear. There are traditional mechanisms used for self-assessment including programme reviews and reports to boards of studies through to academic board and then to Council. In addition, new mechanisms are being developed to review performance using evaluation tools including enquiry questions, performance criteria, and rubrics.

The organisation is continuously tracking achievement data, and the analysis of this data is being used to target support for programmes. There is some evidence that the initiatives that have been implemented are improving success rates for learners, and an evaluation is planned to examine the effectiveness of the various strategies.

In general, staff are positive about their managers and said they felt valued and involved in the decision-making processes for their programme. Across the focus areas there was a strong belief that the organisation invested in staff development, and that staff were encouraged to continuously engage in professional development aimed at improving their performance and that of the learners.

The organisation has determined that it will target its activities towards specific groups of industries, which comprise the broad categories of health, trades, and arts and design. Effective stakeholder engagement with these industries is not widespread, and this may be in part because industry engagement is being mostly managed at the programme level. Currently, the gaps in useful graduate and industry feedback mean the organisation can not be assured as to which qualifications and training are valued.

The wider issue of raising Māori educational achievement still presents a challenge, although recent developments such as Raukura appear to be having a positive effect. As mentioned, UCOL has in development a project referred to as the “indigenisation of the curriculum”. This is broadly aimed at incorporating mātauranga Māori into all programmes. The project may also help UCOL to better understand and match the needs of Māori learners in particular. It was clear that the previous Māori strategy document had failed to gain traction. A new Māori strategy has been written, although it is yet to be widely circulated or implemented.

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 **Good**.

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

Refer section 1.6: *How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?*

2.2 Focus area: Support and pastoral care of international students

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

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

Refer section 1.5: *How well are learners guided and supported?*

As is typical across tertiary education institutions, the course completion rate for international students is higher than for domestic students. In 2009 this was at 86 per cent and increased to 92 per cent in 2010. International support staff have a good understanding of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. There are regular reviews of systems and processes to ensure that UCOL complies with the regulations.

A small team is dedicated to supporting international students. Links between this team and the marketing team and registrar are apparently improving. In response to the increasing numbers of international students arriving at UCOL, there has been an increase in staff hours dedicated to their support. However, staff still report that they are stretched to provide the services required. A possible consequence of this may be the inconsistent approach to orientation and information for new students. Only some students were aware of the services available to them at UCOL. It is unclear how systematic the process is for understanding the needs of this distinct group of students.

2.3 Focus area: Bachelor of Nursing

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

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

Achievement rates in the Bachelor of Nursing have remained steady across recent years, with course completion percentages averaging 87 per cent in 2010, and the Whanganui and Masterton campuses experiencing slightly higher success than Palmerston North. These measures of success are comparable with national averages. Qualification achievement rates are slightly lower, sitting at 73 per cent in 2010. For those who qualify to sit the Nursing Council State Finals examination, UCOL has an almost 100 per cent success rate.

The Bachelor of Nursing programme maintains strong links with key stakeholders in the region, and these links ensure a good understanding of workforce demands and requirements. The programme is working to a revised curriculum which underwent wide consultation before implementation. The shift to the 24/7 clinical work experience is a development widely supported by regional district health board nurse educators because student nurses not only get a realistic experience of shift work demands but also continuity with their assigned preceptor (nurse tutor). The nurse educators are also employed on a proportional basis by UCOL to conduct clinical assessments. These developments have ensured the integration of the trainee into the hospital environment. Stakeholders believed that this had a positive impact on the practical skills obtained by the student.

The new curriculum appears to be embedded and working well, and teaching and learning issues are being constantly reviewed. Feedback from students has resulted in the assessment rubrics being revised in some cases. It has also been noted that the timing of re-sits in the second year puts considerable pressure on students and staff. The shift to self-directed learning is marked for second-year students and extra support has been called for by both tutors and students.

The school has recently been restructured, and additional staff members have been employed to address workload issues. It is believed that the flatter management structure has resulted in students feeling more connected with key staff, giving them more avenues of support when issues arise. Early indications suggest that this and the interviews at enrolment have resulted in improved achievement rates for first-year students.

The programme self-assessment annual report reflects a good understanding of the needs of key stakeholders and a good understanding of how well these needs are being matched. For example, while Māori are achieving at a rate almost as high as non-Māori, the programme has reflected on the need to improve the cultural competencies of both staff and students.

2.4 Focus area: Bachelor of Fine Arts

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

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

Course completion rates in the Bachelor of Fine Arts (offered only at Whanganui UCOL) benchmark well against national averages, with a 90 per cent successful course completion being achieved over a number of years. The value of the qualification is less well understood; however, evidence shows that graduates move to a number of vocations including further study, teaching, and self-employment as artists. External stakeholders believe that the programme could do more to develop the professional and business skills of students. For example, it was suggested that students lack some of the skills required to effectively host an exhibition. Some stakeholders considered that the programme could do more to engage with the local community, for example through participation in community events. Overall, the engagement with stakeholders is inconsistent.

The facilities provided for the fine arts students are good, although some students and staff thought there could be a greater investment in digital technology. Staff are caring and dedicated to their students, who respect their knowledge and skills. One staff member is particularly inspiring, having received a national teaching award and the Prime Minister's supreme award.

All staff are engaged in research and receive a time allocation to ensure they are research-active. They actively participate in local, national, and international exhibitions. Staff expressed some concerns about not being part of the Performance Based Research Fund mechanism; however, there are quality assurance processes followed including oversight by UCOL's research committee and sub-committees.

The external moderator for this programme expressed concerns about the Māori students not reaching the same level as their peers and about the lack of support for Māori students, particularly when dealing with mātauranga Māori or tikanga in their art. Staff recognise this concern, but support the current strategy to address it through the use of visiting Māori artists.

Some community stakeholders in Whanganui perceive a lack of engagement with the programme. Project Perspective seeks to bring the art school and external stakeholders closer together. To date this has included symposia to which staff and community stakeholders have been invited to contribute. Despite UCOL management's assertion to the contrary, there are lingering concerns that this activity involves a further programme review which will result in community needs not being met.

2.5 Focus area: Diploma in Veterinary Nursing

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

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

Course completions in this programme declined as numbers increased over the period 2008-2010. Fewer students have been enrolled this year, but there are expectations that course completions will increase from a low of 59 per cent in 2010 to 72 per cent in 2011. Indications are that this increase is the result of the admissions process enrolling those more likely to succeed rather than any changes to the programme itself. Achievement for Māori is significantly lower than for other domestic students in this programme.

Information collected informally indicates that those who do graduate move into employment or further study. This programme has informal links with industry and recognises the value of these links.

This is a programme offered both on campus and by distance, taught by dedicated staff who have genuine concern for their students. Staff are highly collegial, undertaking team-teaching and peer observations to improve teaching techniques. There has been a major restructuring of the programme in 2011, which may result in assessment timing being managed more effectively. Unfortunately, in 2011 the work placement for first-year students has been poorly organised and managed, with the students being unclear about expectations. The programme appears appropriately resourced physically, but there remains a high staff workload.

2.6 Focus area: National Certificate in Computing (Level 3)

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

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

This is a distance learning programme which previously had open entry. Achievement has been low, with only 33 per cent course completion in 2010, an increase from 25 per cent in 2008. For all students studying in 2011, including those students rolled over from the previous year, the course completion rate is 29 per cent. New enrolments for 2011 shrank dramatically and intentionally, with only 5.6 EFTS enrolled compared with 32.7 the previous year. As expected, those enrolled in 2011 have done better, with a 66 per cent course completion rate.

This dramatic decrease in enrolment is part of a targeted strategy for all distance programmes to ensure that only students who can show evidence of study success can enrol. The programme is paper-based and has seen revisions to the workbook in response to student feedback, although students spoken to by the evaluation team felt the workbooks still contained mistakes and in some parts were confusing.

This programme has not found effective ways of understanding key stakeholder needs. For example, currently student feedback forms are not tailored to the distance mode of study.

This programme suits students who are working or who are unable to attend the polytechnic. Students confirmed that they learnt some useful computing skills which they felt would improve their chances in further study or employment. However, those who had progressed from the level 2 certificate said the programme contained little new information and was therefore too easy. Tutors were responsive to problems and concerns, and assessments were quickly marked and returned with useful feedback. The destinations of students who have graduated from the programme are not systematically collected, although anecdotal evidence suggests that some who move to higher levels of study experience success.

2.7 Focus area: Certificate in Automotive Panel and Paint

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

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

This programme has been part of Project Transform and has seen a dramatic increase in course completions, from a low of 19 per cent in 2009 to 32 per cent in 2010, and an estimated 62 per cent in 2011. This improvement is attributed to a number of factors, including better admission processes, more timely removal of “no-shows” from the register, closer mentoring and pastoral care of students, and a programme that better mirrors the work environment. The involvement of the Student Experience Team has been subtle but significant.

A number of graduates, over a number of years, have been tracked from the programme into employment related to their training. While there is no formal advisory committee, tutors and managers maintain strong links with industry and engage systematically, using that information to inform programme developments. This ensures that graduates are useful to industry, as indicated by a number of workplaces using the programme as a screening tool for potential apprentices and employees.

Tutors have reorganised the curriculum into a programme replicating the workplace, with unit standards embedded. This approach is complemented by a new spray booth and projects that include students participating in a “smash-up derby” and associated car-bonnet painting. Work placements, while not a compulsory component, are useful for those students who choose to take part in them. Feedback from industry indicates that employers would encourage UCOL to facilitate this work experience for students.

The dramatic improvement in course completions is commendable. UCOL has monitored the interventions that have contributed to this success through ongoing evaluations with regular reporting to the Project Transform reference group.

However, the results are too new to indicate whether the improvements will be sustained. Although the Raukura team is working with this programme, the rate of achievement for Māori is yet to improve.

2.8 Focus area: Certificate in Sport and Exercise Performance

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

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

Another programme targeted for Project Transform support, this certificate has also seen a dramatic improvement in course completions, particularly on the Palmerston North campus. In 2010, the Palmerston North course completion rate was 47 per cent. This is expected to rise to 63 per cent for 2011. This programme has equivalent rates of achievement for Māori.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant number of graduates obtain work in a related field or choose to take up further study. Stakeholders indicated that, generally, students are prepared for industry, although improvements could be made to enhance students' people and customer relationship skills. No systematic analysis has occurred to understand how well the students achieve who elect to move on to the sport and exercise degree, although the evaluation team was informed that some achieve well. Engagement with industry is based on individual tutors maintaining their networks and this process could become more systematic. Stakeholder representatives told the evaluation team that they would welcome UCOL creating opportunities for them to engage formally so that a regional perspective could be gained.

Tutors relate well to learners and support them to achieve. Recent attempts to integrate theory with practice have been well received by students. The programme also received support from the literacy team to map their texts against the learning progressions, during which the tutors realised that the texts were pitched at a step beyond their students' level of understanding. There has been some revising of texts and teaching strategies to bridge this gap.

In spite of being timetabled as part of the schedule, very few students engage with the online learning, and there appears to be little incentive to do so. This is a missed learning opportunity.

The support of the Student Experience Team and Raukura Kaitiaki has been a positive influence on the programme in supporting both tutors and students in the classroom and with pastoral care issues. The evaluation team heard examples of how the support provided to learners and tutors during the first assessment was critical in ensuring early success, which contributed to motivation to continue with the course.

Students and staff have regular opportunities to meet and engage in fun learning activities at the Palmerston North campus. Tutors also meet annually to discuss the course and make any changes to course content and assessment material.

While there have been instances of sharing and co-marking assessments and pre- and post-moderation activities across campuses, this does not appear to have been done consistently and systematically to ensure tutors have the opportunity to regularly reflect on, share, and develop their teaching practices.

2.9 Focus area: Certificate in Carpentry (Level 4)

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

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

The Certificate in Carpentry is another Project Transform targeted programme, and, as with the others, course completion rates have improved. In 2010, course completion rates were 39 per cent across the Palmerston North and Masterton campuses. This rate increased to 59 per cent in 2011. Rates of completion are lower for Māori, although they have shown an increase from 31 per cent in 2010 to an estimated 34 per cent in 2011.

The evaluation team was told that the use of the Student Experience Team and Raukura has helped improve completions, with these support staff being brought into the classroom as part of the teaching team. Staff are committed and dedicated and are adopting innovative approaches to learning and assessment. Examples include the use of e-portfolios to demonstrate competency and iPads which the tutors use to photograph evidence of achievement. Students' literacy and numeracy are assessed through the course of their programme, and tutors use effective strategies to target these skills.

Staff reported that they feel well supported by their leadership team, and professional development is encouraged.

House-building and enhancing kindergartens are good examples of project-based work that mirrors the workplace, giving students interaction with other trades and services and enhanced communication skills. There is some tracking of graduates into work, apparently more systematic in Masterton than in Palmerston North. Even though individual tutors have maintained some links with the Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation and other industry stakeholders, there is a lack of formal engagement. As one stakeholder said, "the longer you are off the tools, the less well prepared your trainees will be", implying that there is a risk of tutors losing touch with industry developments.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review other than those implied or expressed within the report.

Appendix

Regulatory 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 non-university TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses 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 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).

*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/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eeer/introduction/>*

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz