



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report

MAX International Colleges Limited

Date of report: 26 November 2025

About MAX International Colleges Limited

MAX International Colleges provides a flexible online Personal Training Programme targeted towards people who wish to be self-employed personal trainers, either in their own studio or gym or as a subcontractor to a gym.

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| Type of organisation: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| Location: | 160a Rose Street, Somerfield, Christchurch |
| Eligible to enrol international students: | No |
| Number of students: | Domestic: 30 equivalent full-time students reported for 2024 delivery. Approximately 52 students were active in the programme at 30 June 2025 (see also data in Appendix). |
| Number of staff: | Four |
| TEO profile: | MAX International Colleges Limited – provider page on NZQA website |
| Last EER outcome: | This is the PTE's first EER. |
| Scope of evaluation: | <p>Personal Training Programme (120 credits, comprising New Zealand Certificate in Exercise (Level 4) [Ref: 3563], and New Zealand Certificate in Exercise (Level 5) [Ref: 3564]) ID. 126780</p> <p>This is the PTE's only NZQA-approved programme and is delivered fully online. The PTE is not government funded and operates a student loan system.</p> |
| MoE number: | 6675 |
| NZQA reference: | C58791 |
| Dates of EER visit: | 8 and 14 August 2025 |

Summary of results

MAX International Colleges is offering a personal training programme that meets important needs of students and other stakeholders. Most students are retained in study, but only a small number have successfully completed the programme since 2022. Self-assessment processes range from effective to poor, and the use of aggregated and analysed data to draw conclusions around performance and make improvements is inconsistent.

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

- Achievement is marginal. Progress through the programme is variable. But most students are retained in study, and their progress is monitored and encouraged.
- The PTE has produced a small number of graduates. Graduates and the industry and other individuals in the community benefit from the programme. Self-assessment evidence is emerging.

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

- The programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, generally match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders. But progress by most students is unconvincing and slower than was proposed to NZQA at approval time. There is a body of self-assessment evidence, recent and emerging, to support programme quality and improvement.
- The evidence around how effective the MAX approaches are in supporting and involving students in their learning is anecdotal and limited. Analysis of student support and its relationship to achievement needs strengthening.
- Governance and management is sound. The PTE is still developing a clear and comprehensive understanding of what NZQA requires from PTEs, particularly in terms of self-assessment. In key operational areas there is limited traceability of actions and inputs to show effectiveness and improvements as they relate to educational

achievement.

- MAX is managing its important compliance accountabilities appropriately.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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| Performance: | Marginal |
| Self-assessment: | Marginal |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>There have been 93 enrolments since MAX was registered with NZQA in October 2020. The skills and knowledge being taught are current and appropriate to the students' learning and career goals.</p> <p>MAX records show 11 students have completed the programme which is a cumulative pass rate of around 10 per cent. For priority group students, one of 10 Māori students enrolled, and none of the eight Pasifika students enrolled have completed. Twenty students have either withdrawn from the programme or become inactive 'due to a financial debt' with the PTE.</p> <p>Data on students' enrolments and completions is being maintained and monitored by staff. It includes annual headcounts, gender and ethnicity data, and priority group data (no student is noted as stating that they have a disability). The PTE monitors student progress and identifies student engagement with the course content. There is no analysis of any pattern (by gender, ethnicity, age, etc) of those not progressing well or withdrawing, with a view to resolving the slow progress.</p> <p>The validation visit by NZQA in October 2024 found that the PTE operates a coherent system to ensure assessment and moderation requirements are met. MAX provided evidence of its engagement with Toi Mai Workforce Development Council (WDC).</p> |
| Conclusion: | Achievement is marginal. Progress through the programme is variable. Most students are retained in study, and their progress is monitored and encouraged. Analysis of student achievement needs strengthening. |

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

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

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| Performance: | Marginal |
| Self-assessment: | Marginal |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>The programme aims to provide the knowledge and skills for students to become qualified personal trainers and to work in the fitness industry as confident employed or self-employed personal trainers in a range of settings and facilities. According to NZQA data, seven students have been awarded the level 4 qualification, and seven the level 5.²</p> <p>Graduates and stakeholders describe benefits from the programme. Employers interviewed said MAX graduates have the appropriate skills and knowledge to work in the fitness industry and be employed or self-employed as a personal trainer. Some mentioned that the 'business orientation' of graduates is notable. Interviewees also endorsed the graduates' orientation towards 'safety and sustainability' in exercise settings.</p> <p>Graduates gain employment, mainly contract and self-employed. The qualifications gained are not mandatory in a largely unregulated industry. Interviewees said there was no pay differential in holding a qualification because employers and clients seeking a personal trainer valued 'soft skills' and personality characteristics as much as qualifications. Voluntary coaching and sports team fitness training are other outcomes valued by some graduates – there are benefits here for the wider community.</p> <p>The PTE so far has few graduates and has provided little in the way of aggregated and recent evidence to demonstrate that the graduate profile outcomes are achieved, or that the programme aim is being achieved by most entrants.</p> |
| Conclusion: | The PTE has produced a small number of graduates. Graduates, the industry and individuals benefit from the programme. Self-assessment evidence is emerging. |

² One student interviewed said they had not yet received their qualification due to an outstanding debt with the PTE.

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

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| Performance: | Good |
| Self-assessment: | Good |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>MAX states in its 'indicative timetable' that 'since the MAX course is an online self-paced course, the time frame to complete the program is determined by the student according to their individual circumstances and time restraints'. MAX communicates this flexibility to prospective students on the website and student guide.</p> <p>The programme has a sound sports science basis and alignment with professional practice in the course work. Some students interviewed and numerous of those who completed surveys said the videos were at times 'dated' and the sound quality 'variable' – especially for the instructional videos filmed outdoors. The general student feedback is that the system for learning is functional, generally meets their needs, and provides useful information. The study format (anywhere, anytime, at your own pace) meets a need for those wanting that mode. MAX provided the evaluators with a list of videos uploaded since programme approval.</p> <p>Students were clear on how assessments are approached and their timing. Some students interviewed said they had only completed online quizzes and had yet to submit any assessment, so they have a limited perspective on how well they are embedding the learning. On the other hand, some students and graduates described some early good outcomes and benefits in their practice and workplace, based on the training and mentoring they have received. The course instructor responds promptly to emails from students seeking technical and course-related guidance. The business advice and its integration into the programme is also valued.</p> <p>MAX supplied internal and external moderation documents for 2024. The results were wholly positive and no potential or required improvements were identified. NZQA noted that the summary comments by both the internal and external moderators were identical. The PTE supplied</p> |

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| | <p>positive feedback (undated) from five employers. Numerous email exchanges between the course instructor and students were supplied to evidence the 'mentoring' aspect of the programme.</p> <p>From a course design perspective, the programme is suitably structured; the online platform and curriculum seem appropriate. These materials have a long history of development and use in the Australian registered training organisation (RTO) which the MAX owners have also operated for several years. The students interviewed appreciated the availability of an app as well as the web-based provision of the learning resources.</p> <p>That said, MAX should consider disaggregating the two qualifications in the programme to improve student progress. A new version of each of the qualifications is required.³ As part of that exercise, NZQA recommends that MAX consider setting and closely monitoring a timeframe within which new students must complete certain programme components (i.e. courses), and a timeframe within which to complete the level 4 certificate. This is common, effective practice seen in numerous NZQA-approved, fully online programmes. Closer ongoing engagement with Toi Mai WDC will be key to managing the qualification version transitions.</p> |
| Conclusion: | <p>The programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, generally match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders. But progress by most students is unconvincing and slower than proposed to NZQA at approval time. There is a body of self-assessment evidence, recent and emerging, to support programme quality and improvement.</p> |

³ 'People currently enrolled in programmes leading to version 1 of this qualification may either complete version 1 before 31 December 2025 or transfer to version 2. The last date of assessment for programmes leading to version 1 is 31 December 2025.' (Source: [NZQA qualification document](#))

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

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| Performance: | Marginal |
| Self-assessment: | Poor |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>MAX has a non-teaching staff member and director designated to support the students (including those enrolled in the Australian RTO and accessing the PTE's course material internationally). A recently enhanced website and a comprehensive student guide provide a range of guidance to the students, and students described timely and helpful responsiveness when they had questions or concerns about their study programme. Some good examples of attention to unexpected crises or health-related issues among the students were described to the evaluators.</p> <p>Motivational and general information-sharing emails are sent to each student daily by MAX.⁴ Students and graduates vary in their opinions about the value and impact of these on their studies. Numerous email exchanges between the student care director and students were supplied to show evidence of the 'mentoring' aspect of the programme. More crucially, there is no aggregated evidence that these practices are effectively supporting good rates of engagement and progress through the programme. Data to support rigorous Code self-review is weak. The student voice needs to be elicited more effectively as the survey approach has proven ineffective.</p> <p>MAX makes a unique value offer to students of 'ongoing support after you graduate to make sure you have a successful and profitable career or business as a top-level Personal Trainer and Fitness Professional'. Graduates also access the full suite of online resources at no cost.</p> |
| Conclusion: | Limitations around the evidence provided of how effective MAX is in supporting and involving students in their learning has affected the ratings under this key evaluation |

⁴ 'Daily, Weekly and Monthly Video and Audio Resources along with additional Educational Tools and Newsletters' (source MAX website).

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

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| Performance: | Good |
| Self-assessment: | Marginal |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>All three directors have longstanding experience in operating an RTO in Australia, and one has governance experience at an NZQA-registered PTE. They have extensive experience in delivering this type of education and training, both face-to-face and online. The staff also have recognition in recreational exercise sectors in New Zealand and internationally.</p> <p>However, the PTE may benefit by establishing an industry advisory group to discuss content and training approaches and formally assess and document the alignment of the courses to changes in science, industry and other stakeholder needs may be formally assessed and documented. An administrative manager effectively coordinates the PTE's (NZQA-approved) student loans, which are taken out by most students.</p> <p>MAX makes good use of technology (a student management system, learning management system as well as Outlook, apps etc). These comprise the main system for managing and sharing information about student enrolments, progress achievement, financials and so on. Staff are clear about their roles and function within the business. To improve self-assessment around programme quality and student achievement – which is informal and somewhat transactional – the PTE could build in mid-year and annual review phases as part of its operating system. This would likely have a structured agenda and lead to minutes and actions tracking to formalise and assist traceability and internal review of key decisions.</p> |
| Conclusion: | Governance and management is sound. The PTE is still developing a clear and comprehensive understanding of what NZQA requires from PTEs, particularly in terms of self-assessment. In key operational areas there is limited traceability of actions and inputs to show effectiveness and improvements as they relate to educational |

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1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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| Performance: | Good |
| Self-assessment: | Good |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>MAX has managed its compliance accountabilities appropriately in the relatively short period since registration. This includes the PTE's approval and accreditation history. The PTE procured a letter of support from Toi Mai WDC at the time the programme approval application was lodged in 2021.</p> <p>A somewhat delayed validation visit by NZQA in November 2024 had a positive outcome: 'at this validation visit, MAX International Colleges Limited met all requirements of the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules'.</p> <p>All attestations and other required documentation to NZQA have been timely and present and correct apart from a misinterpreted annual fee return distinguishing between funded and unfunded students. The PTE was receptive to feedback and immediately corrected this return.</p> <p>The achievement-based assessment events do not require reports resulting to NZQA, but the PTE has engaged with NZQA correctly regarding qualification outcomes for the graduates. MAX has no sub-contracting arrangements, so there are no risks posed to the PTE or NZQA in that regard.</p> <p>Policy and procedure updates occur, and MAX operates using a quality management system as required.</p> <p>As indicated under 1.4, the MAX Code self-review is inadequate. In addition, the required information has not been published on the PTE's website.</p> |
| Conclusion: | MAX is managing its important compliance accountabilities appropriately. There is still a process occurring of learning the full extent of NZQA's quality assurance requirements. |

Focus areas

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

2.1 Personal Training Programme (120 credits, comprising New Zealand Certificate in Exercise (Level 4) [Ref: 3563] and New Zealand Certificate in Exercise (Level 5) [Ref: 3564])

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| Performance: | Good |
| Self-assessment: | Good |

Recommendations

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

NZQA recommends that MAX International Colleges Limited:

- Consider disaggregating the Personal Training Programme so that the two New Zealand certificates can be achieved independently of each other or in sequence.
- Consider setting and closely monitoring a timeframe within which students must complete certain programme components (i.e. of the 39 topics) and the level 4 certificate.
- Owners and staff of the PTE undertake continuing professional development around the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021.
- Build self-assessment capability by gathering and using data on the number and type of student support interactions and their outcomes, to provide evidence that support is robust, equitable and effective for all fee-paying students. Incorporate this data into future Code self-reviews.
- Gather the student voice more effectively and document findings and actions in response to it, for both student and NZQA consideration.
- Consider establishing an industry advisory group where content and training approaches can be discussed, and where the alignment of the courses to changes in science, industry and other stakeholder needs can be formally assessed and documented.

- Build in a mid-year and annual review phase as part of the PTE's operating system, which would have an agenda, to lead to minutes and trackable actions to formalise and add traceability to the operating model.
- Develop a working relationship with Toi Mai Workforce Development Council and maintain lines of communication to support the transition to new qualification versions.
- Owners and staff of the PTE undertake continuing professional development around NZQA PTE registration rules, trends and changes.

Requirements

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

NZQA requires MAX International Colleges Limited to:

Conduct a comprehensive self-review of performance against the required outcomes and processes set out in the Code of Practice, as anticipated and outlined in the NZQA-supplied template. Make a fresh attestation to NZQA about the completion of this self-review. This relates to the ongoing responsibilities of signatories of The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021.

Appendix 1

MAX International enrolment and achievement data (PTE supplied)

| | 2022* | 2023 | 2024 | 2025** |
|--------------------------|-------|------|------|--------|
| New enrolments | 14 | 24 | 30 | 25 |
| NZ European/other | 8 | 17 | 16 | 14 |
| Māori | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Pacific peoples | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| Withdrawn | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Completed | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Retained/active in study | 2 | 10 | 17 | 23 |

*Part-year

**As at 30 June 2025 (1 additional student completed in July)

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud⁵*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

⁵ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs excluding universities, and*
- maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

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

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

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

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022. The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

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

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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