

Report of External Evaluation and Review

NZ School of Radio trading as NZ
Radio Training School

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 14 December 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.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Location:	40 Selwyn Street, Tauranga
Type:	Private Training Establishment
First registered:	2000
Number of students:	Domestic: 14 per intake (20 weeks)
Number of staff:	Three full-time equivalents; numerous and varied contracted presenters
Scope of active accreditation:	National Certificate in Radio (Foundation Skills)
Sites:	40 Selwyn Street, Tauranga
Distinctive characteristics:	New Zealand School of Radio (NZSOR) has limited its student intake to achieve quality training, mixing the teaching required for the qualification with supplementary courses to bring students up to date with current and developing trends and technologies in the industry. There is immediate involvement of new students in practice, both in the school's two on-air studios and in the media industry at large. The aim is to ensure "360-degree" capability in the profession while enabling students to develop their own skills and passions to the full.
Recent significant changes:	Ownership previously changed in 2003 and 2007, and negotiations are now underway for possible purchase by the current managers.
Previous quality assurance history:	At the time of the last quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in 2007, the then-new owner had been at the Tauranga campus for only three months and had not had time to update the quality management system. Five

requirements not met at the time have since been comprehensively addressed by the present management.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected for this external evaluation and review were:

- Governance, management and strategy

This is a mandatory focus area.

- National Certificate in Radio (Foundation Skills)

This qualification is recognised by the industry and is the main focus of the school. It comprises a 20-week course, delivered twice a year, starting in January and June.

- Student support and resources

This is an important feature, providing opportunities and support for experience in live broadcasting, and supplementing the certificate programme with up-to-date learning in radio technology.

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 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/>

This EER was conducted over one and a half days. The manager, staff members, and all students were interviewed. Telephone calls were made to a variety of external stakeholders. Written feedback from students and external stakeholders, and documents detailing the organisation, delivery, assessment, and quality assurance of the national certificate programme were examined.

New Zealand School of Radio has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **NZ School of Radio**.

Retention and completion in the certificate programme has been consistent over the last five years, with an outstanding 100 per cent rate so far in 2010. Eighty-five per cent of first semester students are already employed in the industry. Written and spoken feedback from media operators, with whom students have been placed and graduates employed, emphatically affirms the high quality of their learning, passion, and organisation. All three are key elements of the New Zealand School of Radio's kaupapa. Important contributors are the following.

- A high level of personal attention to each student, with daily, weekly, monthly, and half-semester discussions on learning pathways and progress.
- Wide and constant exposure to the media industry, with real-time practical involvement in broadcasting from the beginning of the programme.
- A substantial body of learning supplementary to the qualification, delivered by industry specialists, to bring students up to date with the latest technological developments.
- A strong focus on social responsibility and on opportunities for involvement in community projects.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **NZ School of Radio**.

An exhaustive enquiry into the quality and value of learning involves both external and internal evaluation. Externally, there is moderation of course design and assessment, benchmarking with other PTEs, regular meetings with local PTEs, contact with overseas trainers, and ongoing follow-up with employers and graduates. Internal features are student feedback on all aspects of the programme, daily meetings with students, weekly reports, and mid-course and end-of-course reviews. Feedback from every source, both internal and external, is analysed and promptly addressed.

Teacher appraisal and a professional development programme are a challenge to the organisation, given the variety of external contributors to the programme. A range of professional development initiatives is in place. More systematic teacher appraisal and mentoring, and a more challenging professional development programme, would safeguard the high level of performance currently achieved. The manager is aware of this and has plans to address the issue in the current year.

Findings¹

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 **Excellent**.

There has been continuous growth in retention and completion in the national certificate over three years. In 2010 to date there has been 100 per cent retention and completion, with 85 per cent of current students employed at the end of the first semester. This is a quantum improvement in employment outcomes from 2009, when employment opportunities at all levels in the industry drained away like water. The willingness of media outlets to employ students reflects the good reputation of the school, evidenced by comments from both students and industry representatives.

Enrolled students are made immediately aware that they have entered the radio industry, and that their studentship is “one long job interview”. Students are quickly exposed to the opportunities and rigours of broadcasting, with placements or internships in any of a wide range of media activities, including 23 iwi stations, newspapers, television, and community organisations. This requires students to focus early on employment needs and opportunities, and these are monitored with written and anecdotal reports on progress and performance. The stakeholders seen and heard by the EER team reported high quality outcomes, in some cases “exceptional”, commitment, passion, and performance by students, all explicit objectives in the NZSOR teaching programme. An excellent and necessary initiative is the delivery of a range of courses supplementing the certificate curriculum, to bring students up to date with new methods and technologies. All students were interviewed at the EER, and were uniformly enthusiastic about the quality of learning, demonstrating in the interview the commitment and confidence the programme aims to inculcate.

The evidence shows agreement by all stakeholders that NZSOR provides high quality learning which is carefully and continuously monitored and evaluated. While already excellent, written feedback from the sector might be further enhanced by formally indicating specific elements of learning to be reported on in particular cases.

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 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 **Excellent**.

The manager and staff of NZSOR are experienced and well-known practitioners in the sector, and maintain formal and informal contacts widely in New Zealand and overseas, for example in Australia, UK, Germany, and Canada, to keep in touch with new technology and other developments in the industry. Six-weekly forums with other PTEs on teaching matters, monthly meetings between NZSOR staff and a succession of individual media operators, and an internship agreement with a prominent Māori broadcaster are instances of an ongoing focus on the currency and value of the programme.

Media talent coaches set standards, and a wide range of presently active media presenters and experts are involved in planning, teaching, and evaluation of the programme. The manager consults employers of past students at three-monthly intervals and travels widely to confer with more than 100 media operators in the region, including 23 iwi operators, widely thought to be vital to young Māori development in the region. Presently, 50 per cent of the student group is Māori, and the female/male split is 50/50. Employment statistics and trends are noted and analysed, and there is ongoing postgraduate tracking of all ex-students, using, among other techniques, Facebook and Twitter.

Consultation, both formal and informal, including a relentless round of telephone, email and face-to-face contacts with sources throughout the sector, and the bonus of consumer feedback on broadcasts from the school studios and community involvement, indicates an assiduous programme of self-assessment of outcomes for students, employers, and the community at large.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

Feedback from employers and placement sites in the sector is strongly positive about the quality of learning. A broadcaster interviewed by the EER team declared that he would seek NZSOR students for employment. This level of approval was reflected in written and spoken evidence, and emphatically endorsed by a prominent Māori broadcaster. Quality is sustained by close attention to the abilities and motivation of individual students.

Enrolment interviews focus strongly on a range of interests, motivations, skills, aptitudes, and needs, to begin, at the very start, to locate possible niche areas in the industry. These features are further explored in daily one-to-one interviews, in weekly reports, and in midway interviews where further direction and development are discussed in depth.

Despite specialisation, students are required to achieve and practise all-round skill in broadcasting in live sessions both in the school studios and in placements, organised either by the teaching staff, or, as is strongly encouraged, by the students themselves. In this

approach, day-by-day evaluation from teachers, employers, and the public is inescapable. Comparative notes from tutors, often with highly individual viewpoints, from presenters and from management, give strength and credibility to evaluations. It is not possible for a student to fall “below the radar”. Completion and employment numbers, and the quality of the written feedback requested from media placements, testify to the success of this approach.

Student feedback on the learning environment, on the programme and its teachers, and in an exemplary response to feedback, is recorded and analysed, and strategies engaged to implement necessary changes. This response is applauded by students for its promptness and appropriateness, and the value the school gives to their views.

Students also commented emphatically on more general changes in their lives, in their improved confidence, ability to relate to others, punctuality and orderliness, and sense of purpose and direction. “Added value” to the curricular learning is integral to success in the industry and is commented on by media employers, but is also a specific focus of management, who monitor factors in students’ personal lives and habits and derive particular satisfaction from improvement.

Performance and self-assessment in this programme so overlap each other that the distinction between them is somewhat artificial. NZSOR’s blend of formal and informal evaluative approaches mirrors a central aspect of the kaupapa of the school and of the industry: that it is both rigorous and relaxed, and that students enjoy their time there and at the same time immerse themselves in the demanding discipline the profession imposes.

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 **Excellent**.

From day one, the culture of the school mixes enjoyment with the strict discipline the industry demands. Students are given maximum exposure to the opportunities and rigours of the sector, with placements, projects and internships with media, and cooperative ventures with professionals. The value of this mix of activities is transparently clear in students’ willingness to question and challenge, and in the outcomes achieved.

Learning begins with immediate immersion in the programme, generic at first, then progressively focussed on the students’ developing skills and interests, which may be modified over time. Tests from a range of written, recorded, and real-time assignments are an early and continuing feature, ensuring continuous focus in a short but concentrated programme. An employer remarked that outcomes from this programme lacked nothing that was provided by often much longer programmes. Despite specialisation, all students are required to demonstrate a “360-degree” range of skills, an important safeguard enhancing their employability.

Learning resources are up to date and plentiful. For example, NZSOR has five studios, two on-air and three for practice and recording. A wide range of learning activities and challenges are offered, including the most recent techniques and methods, e.g. blogging,

Twitter, Facebook, use of the web, Skype, and other technologies to keep pace with the industry. Optional instruction by media experts in new media technology is available. Media personalities are invited to talk to students, a vital opportunity for students to meet, interview, and be advised by successful and admired practitioners.

Comprehensive and timely study and assessment information, with explanatory notes, is provided in electronic format. Talent coaches set practice standards, and assessments are moderated by industry representatives and another PTE.

Self-assessment is implicit in the scope of progress reporting and student feedback, and the meticulous response to both. Teachers are experienced professionals in the industry and maintain an active involvement, especially in the management of student learning. A professional development plan for teaching exists, with teacher training at a local polytechnic, and staff undertake other consultation with local PTEs and specialists on educational best practice. A more comprehensive professional development and staff appraisal schedule is planned by the prospective owner, to protect and perhaps enhance an already excellent teaching programme. Attention to this aspect is important in providing confidence in the school's continued excellence in teaching.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

Throughout the programme, student guidance is an exemplary blend of watchful support and promotion of personal initiative. Day-by-day interviews effectively constitute ongoing needs analysis, with close attention to progress and motivation and to possible changes of focus. Students are helped with selection of practice placements and introductions, and complementing these, are encouraged to seek out their own learning opportunities. One-to-one teaching and special technical learning are offered when required.

The midway interview is a comprehensive review of aims and ambitions, progress, personal well-being and satisfaction with the course, and a vital guide for the second half of the course. In the final month, each student is closely monitored. An encyclopaedic catalogue of employment opportunities is posted on the website, advice is given on employment choices, and students are helped with preparation of applications. Graduates are monitored in their employment, reports are received from employers, and revisits for upgrading welcomed. There is ongoing follow-up with former students, who continue to be treated as colleagues and friends in a demanding industry.

All students are personally known to staff and are given compassionate help with personal crises and challenges. Care is taken to avoid ongoing dependence, and students are encouraged to take active steps of their own towards attainable goals.

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

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

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

Existing policies and the quality management system are actioned under the governance of the present owner. The culture of the organisation, management of teaching, its relationships with the media industry, its definition of valued outcomes and contributing processes, are securely in the hands of the manager, who brings a unique culture to the kaupapa, both strict and relaxed, dedicated to enjoyment in learning, but conscious of the rigorous demands of a changing industry. In this, the school has achieved remarkable success, with completion, retention, and employment outcomes close to 100 per cent so far in 2010, and, with the exception of 2009, which was a year of painful constraint in the industry, a consistent pattern of completion over the last five years. Course scheduling, delivery, assessment, and moderation are meticulously organised and recorded, and their outcomes analysed for strategic planning.

Teaching practice is built on a policy of continuous attention to individual students and exposure to practice opportunities from beginning to end of their studentship. This is informed by six-monthly reports of employment and staircasing information, benchmarking with New Zealand Radio Training School and Bay of Plenty Polytechnic, six-weekly forums with regional education providers, and contact with educators in Australia, Germany, Canada, and the USA.

Management has stayed at the forefront of technological development, making substantial and ongoing additions to the unit standard structure of the qualification. Management has maintained ongoing contact with media operators who contribute to the programme and with students who have made conspicuous contributions.

External stakeholder evaluation include written and oral commentary on students in work placements and graduates in places of employment, external moderation of course design and assessment, regular meetings with local PTEs and media operators, and contact with radio training organisations overseas. A planned succession of monthly forums with individual media organisations will enable NZSOR to accumulate ongoing feedback from a range of different employers.

Internally, there is copious student feedback, daily one-to-one meetings with students, weekly student reports, a comprehensive progress review midway, and a summary review on completion. Feedback from every source is analysed and promptly addressed. More systematic teacher observation and mentoring, and a more comprehensive professional development programme, would better safeguard the high level of performance currently achieved.

All participants interviewed by the EER team unanimously affirmed the quality of outcomes, notably contributions to broadcasting and community programmes. Factors requiring further development include a systematic professional development programme and a more comprehensive approach to self-assessment in teaching, making the organisation potentially more aware of threats and ensuring an ongoing basis for

improvement. The manager is aware of these factors and plans to address them in the current year.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: National Certificate in Radio

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Student support and resources

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

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

Recommendations

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

Further actions

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

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-eer/introduction/>

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