

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Youth Cultures & Community Trust trading as Praxis

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 15 December 2011

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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:	Level 4, 204 Willis Street, Wellington
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	2002
Number of students:	Domestic: 41 equivalent full-time students International: nil equivalent full-time students <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 31 per cent of students are Māori• 16 per cent of students are Pasifika
Number of staff:	Two full-time and ten part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate in Youth Work (Level 4)• Diploma in Youth and Community Studies (Levels 5 and 6)
Sites:	One as above
Distinctive characteristics:	Youth Cultures & Community Trust (Praxis) offers two study options, full-time or part-time, including Tipu Ake. Tipu Ake was developed in partnership with Te Ora Hou Aotearoa, and includes the main elements from the Praxis course as well as content specific to working in a Māori context, including basic tikanga and Māori spirituality within a Christian context. Praxis also holds a contract with the Ministry of Education for the provision of an Alternative Education school, operating in Cannons Creek, Porirua.

Recent significant changes: Praxis has changed from operating two site-based courses (Wellington and Christchurch), to regional-based courses, delivered through block courses and weekly regional meetings with a local tutor.

Praxis is also progressing through an organisational restructure, designed to separate the New Zealand, Australian, and Pacific operations into three independent but cooperating entities.

Previous quality assurance history: The most recent NZQA quality assurance visit was in 2007, when Praxis met all but two requirements relating to late financial attestations and incomplete internal moderation of assessments.

Praxis has engaged with the industry training organisation, Careerforce, for the moderation of Youth Work unit standards, and no issues were noted. Praxis has also engaged with NZQA's Tertiary Assessment and Moderation unit for core generic unit standards, and some modification was required at the most recent submission.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This evaluation included the mandatory focus area of governance, management, and strategy, and one programme focus area, the Diploma in Youth and Community Studies (Level 6), because this qualification includes the majority of students.

International student support was not included as a mandatory focus area in this evaluation because there are no international students enrolled. However, student support is evaluated in 1.5 below.

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 evaluation team consisted of two evaluators, who visited the Wellington site for one and a half-days. The team met with the chair and members of the board of trustees, management, teaching and administration staff, and a sample of students.

External stakeholders were interviewed by phone, and a range of the organisation's documents and records, including electronic files, were also sighted.

Praxis has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and the submission received has 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 **Praxis**.

- Praxis's students achieved very well in 2010, the first year the organisation received Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding.
- Course completion rates (88 per cent) were above the TEC published median (81 per cent) for all private training establishments (PTEs), and well above the median (77 per cent) for levels 5 and 6 programmes on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF).¹ All Māori students completed their courses and 86 per cent completed their qualification. All Pasifika students completed their courses and 62 per cent completed their qualification.
- Overall qualification completion rates (69 per cent or 28 students) were below the PTE median (75 per cent) and below the NZQF levels 5 and 6 median (77 per cent). However, this difference of 8 per cent represents only three students.
- A high percentage of graduates move into youth-related employment or voluntary positions (67 per cent and 22 per cent) reflecting the high employment value of the training.
- Students are provided with a very high level of pastoral care and support, as evidenced by Praxis's self-assessment and interviews with students, staff, and external stakeholders.
- The organisation stays current with industry requirements through close relationships with the youth development sector, principally through Christian churches but also through a wide range of other agencies providing youth support and development.
- The transition from offering the Certificate in Youth Work (Level 4) to the Diploma in Youth and Community Studies (Levels 5 and 6) has challenged the organisation and it is not yet operating as well as management and teaching staff would like, for the reasons noted below.
- Educational performance is to some extent hampered by incomplete or not fully effective processes for course design, development of supplementary course materials, and assessment and moderation issues.

¹ Tertiary Education Commission published tertiary education organisation performance data 2010: <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Learners-Organisations/Learners/performance-in-tertiary-education/Educational-performance-at-individual-tertiary-providers/>.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Praxis**.

- Praxis is in the process of developing and implementing its processes for evaluating the organisation's performance.
- The organisation and staff have well-developed professional and personal networks which provide valuable and detailed feedback on the organisation's performance.
- Praxis has a mix of formal or documented (e.g. surveys, quarterly student progress reviews, and minuted meetings) self-assessment processes, as well as informal meetings, discussions, and other avenues for self-reflection. These are fit for purpose for a small PTE such as Praxis and are to some extent used effectively.
- Not all information collected is used to track and monitor for patterns or trends within Praxis or benchmarked against external organisations to determine performance levels.
- Praxis is reasonably well aware of where its strengths and its vulnerabilities lie, and is in the process of addressing these, for example by improving teaching and assessment material and moderation of assessment, and restructuring the organisation to improve responsibilities and organisational functionality within New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific.

TEO response

Praxis has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Findings²

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**.

Students achieve steady academic success at similar levels to other PTEs delivering programmes at levels 4-6.³ While Praxis's achievement percentage rates for course completions (88 per cent,) and qualification completions on a percentage basis (69 per cent) are slightly above and slightly below sector medians (81 per cent and 75 per cent respectively), the differences equate to only two and three students respectively. Students and external stakeholders interviewed noted significant growth in personal qualities such as confidence and using the skills and knowledge learned in working with youth.

Māori students' achievement is higher than the overall group, with both course completions and qualification completions higher (100 per cent and 86 per cent respectively). Pasifika student achievement rates are also very good, with course completions higher than the overall student group, and qualification achievements slightly lower (100 per cent and 62 per cent).

Praxis has effective processes to monitor student progress, with quarterly reviews of student achievements, an "extra care plan" for any students falling behind, and staff weekly meetings to discuss and review any emerging issues. The organisation collects data well, but it is yet to fully utilise both its quantitative and qualitative data to review student achievement over time and check for emerging patterns or trends. While issues such as those involving teaching or assessment material are being identified, Praxis has yet to develop structured and purposeful evaluation and review processes fully to ensure changes made are resulting in meaningful improvements.

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

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

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

² The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

³ Tertiary Education Commission published tertiary education organisation performance data: <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Learners-Organisations/Learners/performance-in-tertiary-education/Educational-performance-at-individual-tertiary-providers/>

Most Praxis students gain employment in the field of youth work. In 2009, 67 per cent of graduates gained employment in the sector and a further 22 per cent went into related voluntary work. Praxis puts these high achievement figures down to two main factors: its close connections with youth work agencies, and the requirement that students are concurrently either employed or volunteering within the youth development sector.

Staff have worked closely with Wellington Institute of Technology (WelTec) in the development of the Bachelor of Youth Development, and have developed an unofficial articulation agreement whereby Praxis level 6 diploma graduates have one year of the degree cross-credited. Students graduating with a Praxis diploma at level 6 have the added benefit of also gaining the National Diploma in Youth Work (Level 6), which is embedded within the local qualification.

Praxis facilitates training advisory groups (TAGs) with membership drawn from churches and agencies working with youth that are actively sending their members to train with Praxis. These groups are providing effective input into the development of programmes and providing confirmation of the value of the training for students and graduates in the field.

A number of churches and agencies have referred several staff to Praxis for training, indicating a level of confidence in the value of skills and knowledge gained in completing either a certificate or diploma. Students, staff, and stakeholders interviewed at this evaluation spoke of the personal growth and confidence gained by many students during their studies. Praxis regularly has many more students wishing to enrol than it is able to accommodate, in itself an indicator that its programmes are of high value.

Praxis conducts regular student surveys to monitor satisfaction with the learning and teaching and support provided by the institution. The surveys indicate a consistently high level of satisfaction over time. The organisation is currently reviewing its student survey formats and questions, including looking at online surveys with a view to improving the quality and analysis of data for bringing about improvements.

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 **Good**.

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

Praxis programmes and activities are well matched to the needs of learners and agencies working in the youth development field. The organisation achieves this through student surveys and ongoing relationships with agencies, through informal networking, and through the TAG groups. Student surveys show a consistently high rating over time (4.3 on a 1-5 scale) for having their needs met.

While Praxis has a relatively low student dropout rate, it is aware that its recruitment and enrolment processes are not yet as rigorous as it would like in order to ensure student academic success and that students have the capability and character for working within the youth development sector. Some stakeholders interviewed as part of this evaluation noted this deficiency, saying a more in-depth and rigorous interview process might be needed prior to students being accepted for enrolment.

The organisation has close relationships with Māori and Pasifika youth agencies, and monitors and addresses the cultural and learning needs of Māori and Pasifika students well. One indicator of this is the success rates of these students.

Praxis is a small training establishment and is able to maintain close one-to-one attention between tutors and students to monitor how well needs are met. This monitoring is supplemented with student surveys, which provide quantitative and qualitative data. Survey results are used to some extent by the organisation to better meet student and stakeholder needs. Students and staff interviewed at this evaluation noted the need for further development in areas such as academic referencing and improved guidance with tertiary study skills.

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**.

Teachers engage well with students and are well qualified in their particular fields of expertise, many being trained teachers. Evidence of the effectiveness of the teaching was noted in the course and qualification completion rates over time. Praxis monitors student success as enrolment numbers over students passing courses, and between 2003 and 2008 course completions were consistently between 74 per cent and 84 per cent, with graduation rates between 71 per cent and 100 per cent.⁴ Further evidence was shown in students' performance "in the field", with employers noting that, "students are able to apply their skills". Praxis collects this data directly from agencies and churches, and this was confirmed by evaluator phone interviews during this evaluation.

Students expressed some concern to the evaluators about the time taken to return assessments and marks in some cases. Praxis management is aware of this and has appropriate plans in place to address this issue.

Learning outcomes and assessment material for some modules are not well aligned or sufficiently clear for students, resulting in ineffective learning and teaching occurring in a small number of courses. This is not the case in the majority of

⁴ Praxis self-assessment and database figures.

modules or courses, and again management is aware of this and is implementing improvements, such as rewriting or reformatting course and assessment material, which are likely to bring improvements.

Praxis also operates an Alternative Education school in Porirua, under contract to the Ministry of Education. While this was not a focus area at this evaluation, the evaluators noted that the contract had been successfully run for a number of years, with the ministry increasing student numbers year on year, indicating a level of satisfaction with the performance of this programme.

While the organisation has an assessment moderation plan, there are some gaps in carrying out the moderation of assessments. This was identified as an issue at the previous NZQA quality assurance visit in 2007. However, Praxis has engaged with NZQA's moderation unit for the national external moderation of NZQF core skills unit standards delivered through the Alternative Education programme.

There are some gaps in the organisation's processes to identify students' plagiarism. While plagiarism is known and acknowledged by management (although it is not a widespread issue), a plan to introduce more formal processes, such as internet-based software or similar, has yet to be implemented.

The organisation has many self-assessment processes to monitor teaching quality and outcomes, including staff performance reviews and student satisfaction surveys. These are not yet well coordinated and do not provide as complete a picture as the organisation would like, and Praxis is in the process of using this information to make changes and is monitoring actual improvements.

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 **Good**.

Students are provided with a caring, open, and supportive learning environment. Praxis is a small organisation with approximately 35 students and 12 staff, allowing it to provide close one-to-one student support. Enrolled students are provided with student handbooks with a good level of information about Praxis and its processes. Student surveys show a consistently high level of satisfaction with the support provided.

Praxis had one international students enrolled at the time of this evaluation, and no issues or areas of concern were noted or brought to the attention of the evaluation team. NZQA has not received any student complaints.

The organisation is working well with agencies and churches involved in youth development, and this has provided consistent internal and external student support, delivered in a Christian and Māori kaupapa environment. Students and external stakeholders interviewed at this evaluation confirmed the organisation's self-assessment finding that students receive exemplary support.

Students falling behind in their studies are provided with an “extra care plan” and regular reviews are held between students, teachers, and agencies to monitor and evaluate the development of critical factors such as cultural safety and appropriate youth-work skills and behaviours.

The organisation has a reasonably well planned and structured approach to assuring itself that its students are well cared for, including informal discussions and meetings and formal student surveys which are collated and reviewed for patterns and trends.

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**.

Praxis is an organisation with a clear vision and purpose, describing itself as a “network of Christian practitioners and educators...[that] exists to educate and equip those who work for the development of young people in their country. Our primary focus is on education, and the real test of our effectiveness is...what people can do with what they have learned from us”.⁵

Praxis has recently experienced considerable growth beyond New Zealand into the Pacific and Victoria, Australia, and has recently identified the need to restructure the organisation to separate the three regional operations into separate entities, as well as its Alternative Education school into a fourth entity, with the purpose of more clearly focusing each part of the organisation. This restructure is at an initial stage and it is too early to see any resulting improvements yet.

The organisation engages effectively with other TEOs. For example, a key staff member has been closely involved with WelTec on the development of its Bachelor of Youth Development, and there is an informal articulation agreement between Praxis and WelTec enabling Praxis level 6 diploma graduates to gain entry to year two of the degree programme.

Praxis management has appointed well qualified and experienced staff and has good processes for supporting their ongoing professional development, and programmes are in the main well resourced.

The organisation’s processes for reflecting on and reviewing its educational performance are to some extent well established, but there are some gaps, as already noted, such as implementing changes to the internal moderation of assessment and developing improved learning resources for some programme modules.

⁵ The Praxis Network 2010/2011 Annual Report Victoria New Zealand Pacific

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**.

2.2 Focus area: Diploma in Youth and Community Studies (Level 6)

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

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those expressed or implied 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/>*

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