

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Vet Nurse Plus Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 21 July 2015

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.....	4
Summary of Results	5
Findings	7
Recommendations	15
Appendix	16

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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

Name of TEO:	Vet Nurse Plus Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	8/2 Bishop Dunn Place, Bishopgate Business Centre, Botany South, Auckland
Delivery sites:	As above and 38/D William Pickering Drive, Albany, North Shore, Auckland
Courses currently delivered:	Vet Nurse Plus Certificate in Veterinary Nursing (Level 5)
First registered:	10 September 2007
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	52 individual learners Nine Māori Two Pasifika
Number of staff:	6.7 full-time equivalent staff
Scope of NZQF consent to assess:	Nil
Distinctive characteristics:	Vet Nurse Plus delivers their level 5 certificate programme through a mix of 65 per cent theory (classroom-based) and 35 per cent practical (in veterinary clinics). Assessment occurs in each practicum so students graduate with significant practical experience.

Recent significant changes: Minor change in ownership, with new shareholders joining the organisation in 2014.

NZQA has approved two changes to the programme, one in 2013 and the other in 2014. These relate to minimum pass marks and the programme structure.

Previous quality assurance history: Vet Nurse Plus had an external evaluation and review (EER) in 2011, resulting in NZQA being Confident in both the organisation's educational performance and self-assessment.

Vet Nurse Plus is not required to have assessments externally moderated by any standard setting body, but voluntarily shares assessment samples for external moderation with other tertiary providers of Vet Nurse programmes. This has resulted in assessment being confirmed as fit-for-purpose and assessor judgements as at the appropriate level.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This evaluation included the mandatory focus area governance and management, which provides an overview of the strategic and operational levels of the organisation. The other focus area was Vet Nurse Plus Certificate in Veterinary Nursing (Level 5). This is the only programme currently delivered. In effect this was an evaluation of the whole organisation.

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 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.

A team of two evaluators visited the organisation's two delivery sites in Auckland over two days. The evaluators interviewed members of the board, management, the tutors at each site, and all students present on the day at each site.

The evaluators spoke with a range of stakeholders and reviewed a wide range of the organisation's documents, records and data base information.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Vet Nurse Plus Limited**.

The following factors contribute to this level of confidence:

- Students' course and qualification completion rates are high and are trending up over the last three years. Course and qualification completion rates rose from 76 and 69 per cent respectively in 2012 to 91 and 84 per cent respectively in 2014¹. These are good achievement rates for a year-long programme.
- Graduate employment rates are consistently high: 74 per cent in 2014, with around 72 per cent of these jobs in vet nursing roles.
- Students achieve relevant workplace soft skills² and veterinary nursing technical workplace skills while on clinic placements and theory classes.
- The programme is planned with care, is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it is delivered as approved by NZQA, and stays current with industry best practice.
- Tutors are qualified and experienced veterinary nurses and veterinarians and hold or are working towards qualifications in adult teaching at certificate and diploma level. There are robust processes for monitoring and supporting effective teaching as well as ongoing relevant professional development.
- The organisation is innovative in its approach to seeking and embracing new teaching and learning technology.
- Governance and management personnel have extensive experience in veterinary practice and tertiary education, and proactively stay current with changes in regulations and vet nursing.

These factors lead to a high level of educational performance.

¹ 2014 achievement data not yet confirmed by the Tertiary Education Commission.

² For more information see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_skills

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Vet Nurse Plus Limited**.

The following factors contribute to this level of confidence:

- The organisation effectively assesses students' needs at enrolment. The organisation attributes gains in course and qualification completion rates with recent changes to how students are screened at enrolment.
- Vet Nurse Plus collates relevant quantitative and qualitative data, which is regularly reviewed and analysed, discussed across the organisation and used for ongoing improvements.
- There is a reflective culture, open communication processes and sharing of ideas and practice across all levels of the organisation.
- The organisation surveys widely: for example, students, clinics providing work placements, and graduates (up to 6 months after completing the training). The organisation analyses this data, and the changes the organisation has implemented are leading to worthwhile improvements.
- Staff undertake a structured, twice-yearly self-reflective performance review, involving input from their manager. This leads to effective sharing of good practice and improvements in learning and teaching.
- Management and governance are well informed through weekly and monthly reporting of changes, such as the current Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ), programme updates or changes to meet industry practice, and students' progress.
- Organisational self-assessment is structured and planned. There was clear evidence of a culture of proactive self-reflection and improvement occurring across all levels and at both delivery sites.

The evaluators consider that Vet Nurse Plus demonstrated a high level of proactive environment scanning and internal review. The evidence sighted at this evaluation provided NZQA with the basis for the overall high confidence in the organisation's educational provision and capability in self-assessment.

Findings³

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**.

The most recent achievement data shows that students are completing courses and qualifications at high rates, and have significantly exceeded the Tertiary Education Commission investment plan performance targets. Combined with the high employment rates of graduates in vet nursing related positions, this indicates that Vet Nurse Plus students achieve at an exemplary level (see table 1)

Table 1. Educational Performance Indicators (TEC)⁴ for Vet Nurse Plus Limited, 2012-2014

	2012 %	2013 ⁵ %	2014 ⁶ %
<i>Course completions</i>	76	71	91
<i>Qualification completions</i>	69	65	84
<i>Graduate employment</i>	77	78	74+ ⁷
<i>Employment related to programme</i> <i>(Internal target 70%)</i>	85	79	72+

NB 2014 course and qualification achievement rates TBC prior to publishing this report

Employer feedback in the Vet Nurse Plus surveys indicates students are well prepared in both their technical knowledge and their soft skills, such as initiative, confidence in dealing with animals and the public, and critical thinking skills appropriate to vet nursing.

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

⁴ To search for an organisation's educational performance information, see <http://www.tec.govt.nz/learners-organisations/learners/performance-in-tertiary-education/educational-performance-at-individual-tertiary-providers/>

⁵ In 2012 and 2013, Vet Nurse Plus had a course pass mark 20 per cent above the sector average. While the achievement rates appear lower, they represent a significantly higher minimum pass marks (70 per cent). The 2014 achievement rates are significantly higher than previous years, and still represent course pass marks (60 per cent), higher than the sector average (50 per cent).

⁶ 2014 achievement data not yet confirmed by the Tertiary Education Commission.

⁷ Further data yet to be confirmed at the time of publishing

The validity of assessments is robustly reviewed both internally and through a voluntary external moderation group involving other tertiary providers of vet nurse programmes. These processes provide a high level of assurance that the achievement rates are valid.

While the industry attracts a small percentage of Māori and Pasifika students, those who do enrol achieve at similar rates to other students. Vet Nurse Plus is working with other tertiary providers and reviewing its own processes to attract more Māori and Pasifika students to its programmes.

Student achievement data is accurately recorded, tracked, reviewed and used to make changes that lead to ongoing and meaningful improvements. For example, all staff now use the student management system daily, and student profiles are recorded along with attendance. Staff maintain reflective journals and discuss emerging issues at formal meetings and informally on a daily basis.

Vet Nurse Plus benchmarks its performance against internal targets, year-on-year data, and two other tertiary providers delivering vet nursing programmes. The organisation's self-assessment of this information shows student achievement is rising, and the latest data compares very well against the organisation's own targets and other tertiary providers.

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 primary outcomes of value are that students gain an NZQA-recognised level 5 certificate, which, for the majority of graduates, leads to employment in the vet nurse industry. Employment figures from 2012 and 2013 were 77 per cent and 78 per cent. The interim rate for 2014 is 74 per cent. The six-month follow-up period is not yet complete, so Vet Nurse Plus expects this figure to rise in the next two months.

Vet Nurse Plus has close connections with a wide range of vet clinics. Students spend two days a week each semester, repeated each semester, on work placement in a vet clinic. This provides students with regular opportunities to put the theory learned in the classroom into practice and to have their skills and knowledge assessed in a commercial environment. This is a contributing factor to the high rate of graduate employment.

The clinical placements also provide students with opportunities to see a range of career choices: for example, working in an animal hospital and a range of specialist vet clinics. Around 25 per cent of students gain offers of employment before they graduate, indicating that Vet Nurse Plus students are gaining recognised and

valued skills and knowledge before graduation. The Auckland partner clinic surveys indicate 100 per cent would employ a vet nurse graduate in the future, and similarly 100 per cent were satisfied with the level of support from the visiting Vet Nurse Plus coordinator.

After each placement the organisation surveys both the students and the clinics. Analysis of this feedback indicates the success of the strategy, as well as identifying areas needing adjustment (i.e. student notes or programme content). Examples of this are changes in technology (moving from manual x-ray processing to digital x-ray processing) and pharmacology and legislation related to veterinary medicines.

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**.

The organisation has over 30 years of connections in the vet industry and maintains close relationships with the industry through informal networks as well as membership in the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association.

Vet Nurse Plus provides Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Accredited Vet Nurse Programme (AVNP) programmes to vet nurses. These accredited programmes provide vet nurses with professional development and contribute 'points' towards their (currently voluntary) registration. These programmes add value to the wider New Zealand vet nurse community, as well as graduates of Vet Nurse Plus.

In response to a review of graduation rates in previous years, Vet Nurse Plus adjusted its recruitment and student needs assessment at enrolment. They aimed to improve their enrolment processes by determining students' goals and their likelihood of completing the training. This process now includes a camp where new students carry out activities together and gain some skills as a group. In this environment, tutors can observe the students' communication and problem-solving skills, as well as helping students gain an understanding of their learning style strengths. These enrolment changes, along with two structural changes to the programme (programme disaggregation and pass marks, approved by NZQA in 2013 and 2014) have significantly lifted student achievement, indicating that the organisation is more closely matching student needs.

The organisation is actively involved in the TRoQ review of New Zealand Qualifications Framework qualifications, and is preparing programmes to meet the requirements of the New Zealand Certificate in Animal Technology (Veterinary Nursing Assistant Strand) (Level 5) as well as the New Zealand Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (Level 6).

Final Report

The current programme has appropriate overall planning, and weekly scheduling provides a high level of assurance that it is delivered as approved by NZQA.

Staff meeting minutes and management reports to the board show that the programme is regularly reviewed. This includes contracting an external specialist to review two problematic courses. This external review provided an objective analysis of the level of the learning material and resulted in some readjustments to better meet students' needs and programme requirements at level 5.

The Vet Nurse Plus certificate in veterinary nursing matches the needs of the industry and of students, as shown by students' graduation and employment rates.

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**.

Vet Nurse Plus tutors are highly effective. A range of factors show this. For example: how well tutors engage with students on an individual level; and that tutors hold vet nursing qualifications appropriate to the level they are teaching (and have worked as vet nurses), and have completed the National Certificate in Adult Education and Training (Level 5) or are working towards this. One tutor is currently completing the National Diploma in Adult Education and Training (Level 6). Some Vet Nurse Plus tutors are also qualified veterinarians.

Tutors maintain a reflective journal of daily events, learnings and issues arising and there was evidence that these are discussed informally on a daily basis, as well as used to bring items of interest to regular tutor meetings. Staff interviewed during this evaluation noted that these meetings were particularly valuable and contributed to their review of their own practice in support of their colleagues.

Performance appraisal processes are rigorous, and include staff self-review, management review and discussions that contribute to establishing individual performance indicators and goals for professional development. Staff and management interviewed during this evaluation commented that this system was effective and added value. Staff are involved in a wide range of professional development: for example, taking courses related to vet nursing and adult teaching, such as in dog psychology and motivating reluctant learners.

As noted, the internal moderation of assessment is robust and the organisation voluntarily engages with two other tertiary providers of vet nursing for external moderation. This provides a high level of assurance of the validity of students' learning and achievement.

The organisation uses a wide range of assessment tools, including workplace verification, case studies, multi-choice, and examinations. This provides students

with a range of opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and the skills they have gained. Vet Nurse Plus has a higher than average pass mark and a well-considered approach to reassessing students, including challenge questions and full reassessment.

The organisation uses an Internet-based platform to share good practice and teaching strategies. There are regular staff meetings to discuss student progress and emerging issues. The organisation has a high level of understanding of the effectiveness of their programme design, approach to teaching and preparing students for work, gained through self-assessment.

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**.

Students are well supported from enrolment to graduation. Information provided prior to enrolment has sufficient detail for students to make informed choices. It includes clearer information on the nature of the training and the level of study required to succeed. The pre-enrolment information also includes such matters as assessment, attendance, the complaints process and advice on academic misconduct. Students are closely followed up when their attendance drops below 80 per cent. During this evaluation, the organisation showed evidence of an overall high level of attendance, above the organisation's target.

As noted above, the organisation has considered its enrolment and student needs assessment processes, making changes that have improved student success rates. The organisation gave examples of internal complaints that were dealt with sensitively, where external mediators were used and any concerns were resolved satisfactorily for all parties.

Students' placement in vet clinics for work experience involves tutors matching students and vet nurse personalities to ensure a successful placement. Post-placement surveys of students and clinics indicates a high level of satisfaction with placements, in turn showing that these processes work well.

Staff gave a number of examples where they gave students extra support and time: for example, one-to-one support, extra tutorials and adapting assessment processes for students with specific needs such as dyslexia.

Students interviewed during this evaluation commented on the extra support they receive to prepare for work through real world environments on clinic placements, as well as the small class sizes.

Regular student and vet clinic surveys provide a good level of information for the organisation to review emerging issues and to monitor student satisfaction, which

has been consistently high. The organisation analyses the satisfaction ratings on a 1-10 scale, and collates and reviews student and clinic feedback. These processes, along with daily attendance, and student progress monitoring provides the organisation with robust review processes.

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**.

Vet Nurse Plus' board and management have a clear focus on educational achievement, and are highly effective in monitoring student achievement. As noted, the organisation regularly reviews all aspects of its programme design and delivery, and student results and employment outcomes.

The board includes members from the veterinary profession and some with education experience. They meet twice a year, and receive management reports monthly. Both management and the board have a clear focus on educational matters, monitoring and tracking external factors, for example the current TRoQ review of qualifications, the tertiary education strategy, as well as closely tracking students' progress, graduation and employment rates. Weekly staff meetings show regular discussions: for example, on programme planning, timetabling, staff availability and clinical placements.

Both the board and management have structured and effective processes to monitor their ongoing compliance with all relevant regulations, and no concerns were brought to the evaluators' attention.

The organisation has internal targets for educational performance and proactively monitors its progress towards meeting and exceeding its contracted performance targets with the Tertiary Education Commission.

The organisation has hired tutors with vet nursing experience and qualifications and has supported them to gain adult education qualifications where these are not previously achieved, and some tutors are qualified veterinarians. Staff have access to financial support for ongoing professional development, and commented during this evaluation that they were well supported by management and the board with appropriate teaching resources, well-appointed classrooms and vet nursing related technical equipment appropriate to the programme level.

The previous evaluation report from 2011 included no specific recommendations. However, the organisation has developed a considered overall approach to organisational self-assessment, which includes all staff across the organisation, and facilitates the collation, reviewing and analysis of a wide range of data. This

analysis results in ongoing changes, as already noted, leading to meaningful improvements to learning and teaching, and graduate outcomes.

The evaluators consider that Vet Nurse Plus demonstrated a high level of proactive environment scanning and internal review. The evidence sighted at this evaluation provided NZQA with the basis for the excellent rating in governance and management, and the overall high confidence in the educational provision and capability in self-assessment.

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: Vet Nurse Plus Certificate in Veterinary Nursing (Level 5)

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

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

Recommendations

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

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes 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 External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

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).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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