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External Evaluation and Review Report



Maria Montessori Education Foundation

Date of report: 6 December 2019

About Maria Montessori Education Foundation (MMEF)

MMEF provides internationally accredited training for Montessori educators working in early childhood settings.¹

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	11 Mills Lane, Albany, Auckland
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Current enrolments: seven domestic and two international students (no Māori or Pasifika)
Number of staff:	Two part-time staff
TEO profile:	Maria Montessori Education Foundation MMEF's NZQA-approved programme is delivered part-time through a mix of block courses and teaching placements over 18 months. In addition to the level 7 diploma, MMEF also delivers short certificate courses (non-NZQA approved).
Last EER outcome:	In 2015, NZQA was Highly Confident in MMEF's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	AMI 3-6 Diploma in Montessori Education (Level7) ² – NZQA-approved programme
MoE number:	7871
NZQA reference:	C37456
Dates of EER visit:	1 and 2 October 2019

¹ MMEF is affiliated to AMI (Association Montessori Internationale) and accredited to deliver the internationally recognised AMI 3-6 Diploma in Montessori Education.

² The level 7 diploma was launched in July 2018 and will be completed in January 2020. This evaluation also considered the previous NZQA-approved qualification, AMI 3-6 Diploma in Montessori Education (Level 6) delivered 2015-2017.

Summary of Results

MMEF delivers highly valued specialist training for Montessori educators; graduates readily gain employment. MMEF is effectively managed and well supported by the Montessori community. Self-assessment is fit for purpose and leads to improvements.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- MMEF is achieving very high rates of successful programme completion. Graduates are very knowledgeable about Montessori theoretical principles and child development and have specialist teaching skills.
- MMEF is highly regarded as an expert provider of Montessori teacher training. Strong community support is evident in the voluntary contributions of key individuals in providing leadership and advice to the PTE, and early learning centres in sponsoring students for training and providing placements.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Effective review and consultation processes have resulted in a well-designed level 7 diploma which meets the requirements of AMI for accreditation and is also aligned to the needs of the New Zealand Montessori community.
- Academic integrity and standards are maintained through comprehensive programme documentation, robust academic quality processes and highly qualified staff.
- Highly effective, individualised support is available for students throughout the programme.
- The self-assessment framework is suitable for an organisation of this size and nature. Information gathered formally and informally is used to monitor and improve educational performance and stakeholder outcomes.
- Management of key areas of compliance is generally effective. Improvements are required to maintain full compliance with the Code of Practice.

Key evaluation question findings³

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>All students successfully completed the AMI 3-6 Diploma in Montessori Education (Level 6), delivered 2015-2017. The current intake for the level 7 diploma (nine students) is making satisfactory progress and all students are expected to complete in January 2020.</p> <p>Students are achieving a deep understanding of children’s development and a thorough knowledge of Montessori principles and how to apply them in working with children. Students report significant personal and professional growth during the programme of study, which is reflected in their behaviour and teaching practice.</p> <p>Students’ results are underpinned by robust assessment and moderation practices. These include systematic internal moderation, external moderation by a New Zealand Montessori specialist, and final assessment by AMI examiners.</p> <p>MMEF monitors individual student progress closely and has an excellent understanding of each student’s personal and professional development. This understanding is supported by checklists, feedback from teaching practice supervisors, and regular meetings with the director of training. Extensions and resubmissions are available in prescribed circumstances and taking account of overall workload.</p> <p>Student achievement is reviewed and reported at regular minuted academic and management meetings.</p>
Conclusion:	MMEF is achieving very high rates of programme completion. Students are gaining knowledge, skills and attributes to become qualified as Montessori teachers.

³ 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?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Graduates value the employment opportunities available in New Zealand and overseas from achieving a specialist Montessori qualification. All graduates of the level 6 diploma gained employment in Montessori settings, including one overseas. A study pathway is available for graduates wishing to complete further training to become New Zealand-registered early childhood teachers.⁴ International students benefit from a New Zealand study experience and exposure to New Zealand culture.</p> <p>The high standards of knowledge, teaching skills and personal attributes of graduates are adding value to Montessori education in New Zealand. In addition, MMEF delivers non-NZQA approved short certificate courses for those wishing to become teaching assistants. MMEF also hosts international AMI trainers, providing opportunities for professional development for current teachers or parents.</p> <p>MMEF maintains strong, ongoing relationships with alumni and the wider Montessori community. This is reflected in the willingness of early learning centres to sponsor students in the programme and to provide teaching placements. In addition, key individuals voluntarily provide important management and practical assistance to the PTE. These activities provide regular opportunities for MMEF to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the training. Additionally, MMEF more formally gathers input on the programme through a local advisory group and maintains currency and consistency with international practice through the scientific pedagogy group of AMI.</p>
Conclusion:	Graduates readily gain employment as Montessori-trained teachers. The Montessori community highly values MMEF for developing graduates with a strong grounding in Montessori values and philosophy, and who meet international standards for Montessori educators.

⁴ MMEF has an agreement with Te Rito Maioha, which provides for cross-credits towards the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE).

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Thorough consultation informed MMEF’s development of the level 7 diploma, including a review of the delivery mode.⁵ Reflections on the programme, which is in its first delivery, are ongoing and lead to improvements, such as strengthening the bicultural element and integration with the New Zealand learning context.⁶ Further areas for review have been identified for more formal consideration at the end of the programme, such as a review of the research paper. AMI maintains oversight of, and approves any significant changes to, the teaching programme.</p> <p>MMEF is effectively meeting the needs of students for building knowledge and skills in a structured programme within a carefully designed learning environment with access to appropriate Montessori materials. Teaching strategies effectively integrate theory with practice, providing opportunities for reflection and reinforcing learning. Supervised observations and teaching practice, in a variety of early learning settings, follow every module.</p> <p>Student progress is measured through regular observations and conversations, and scheduled formative and summative assessments. Moderation is used to review and improve assessment practice, such as feedback to students. Outcomes uphold assessor judgements.</p> <p>The training director is an AMI-accredited trainer whose performance is regularly monitored by AMI, and is required to complete regular professional development.</p>
Conclusion:	MMEF is delivering a programme that is meeting the needs of stakeholders. Self-assessment information is gathered from a variety of sources and used insightfully to identify improvements.

⁵ A modular approach has been adopted for delivery of the level 7 programme, replacing the summer block course format previously used.

⁶ Te Whāriki is the curriculum document for early childhood education in New Zealand.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Individualised support for students' learning and wellbeing contributes to MMEF's high achievement rates.</p> <p>Students are provided with comprehensive information and advice prior to enrolling in the MMEF programme. Some enrol in a short certificate course before making the commitment to full-time study. The workload and impact on family life can be challenging, especially for students who live outside Auckland and/or are in employment or other formal programmes of study. However, overall, students are very satisfied with their study experience and appreciate the care and support offered by MMEF. The class is small and students establish strong social and academic support networks. Students benefit from a well-planned and structured learning environment.</p> <p>MMEF has effective processes for monitoring student engagement, progress and wellbeing. These include regular 'health check' meetings with the course administrator, academic progress meetings with the director of training, and supervision and documented feedback during teaching placements. Attendance is closely monitored. Programme documentation assists students to meet course requirements and deadlines. Examples were provided of barriers to learning being identified and appropriate support provided to succeed.</p> <p>MMEF gathers student feedback informally and formally through student surveys. Feedback gathered after orientation was subsequently used to support students to prepare for a marae visit. Other feedback will inform changes to the next programme.</p> <p>Recently, information for international students was reviewed and improved as part of the annual review of the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016.</p>
Conclusion:	Students' attributes, goals and personal circumstances are well understood. MMEF is very effective in supporting students to remain engaged and to successfully meet all requirements of their study programme.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>MMEF has effective linkages to the Montessori community, both in New Zealand and overseas. Voluntary governance members, who have an appropriate mix of skills and backgrounds, contribute to the direction and management of the PTE.</p> <p>Despite very small cohorts and the lack of permanent premises, MMEF is a sustainable organisation, carefully managing resources and planning for the future. Governance and management meet very regularly, using strategic planning and self-assessment documents to focus conversations and activities across the organisation. MMEF is systematically gathering feedback from stakeholders, including learners, to identify areas for further investigation and improvement. The survey instruments are also subject to ongoing review.</p> <p>MMEF has effectively managed the transition from a level 6 to a level 7 diploma. The director of training is now an accredited AMI trainer. This has provided organisational efficiencies and ensured MMEF's high standards and authenticity are maintained, while also enhancing opportunities to reflect the New Zealand context in the programme.</p> <p>The director of training is well supported for both management and academic responsibilities. This includes ongoing mentoring and professional development, and regular formal and informal feedback from local colleagues, including the external moderator.</p>
Conclusion:	MMEF management, staff and stakeholders are positively engaged in a shared vision for providing a high-quality AMI teaching qualification within a strongly supportive learning environment. MMEF has a well-planned and effective self-assessment framework, involving regular consultation and review of priority areas. Analysis of information and data is insightful and used to support educational achievement.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>MMEF has appropriate processes for maintaining academic standards and integrity. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moderation processes and monitoring programme delivery and student learning hours for consistency with NZQA programme approval • meeting academic and contractual requirements for delivery of an AMI-accredited programme. <p>MMEF monitors information from regulatory agencies within New Zealand and overseas, and responds appropriately to changes.</p> <p>MMEF conducts regular reviews of key policies and procedures.</p> <p>MMEF has processes to meet legislative obligations including the Health and Safety at Work Act 2016 and the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.</p> <p>MMEF completes annual reviews of compliance with the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016. A review of international student files revealed two instances where the Code's requirement that students hold appropriate insurance at all times was not met in the previous year but was met at the time of the visit.</p>
Conclusion:	MMEF has generally effective processes for managing key areas of compliance. Careful attention to requirements for the enrolment of international students is required.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: AMI 3-6 Diploma in Montessori Education (Level 7)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

2.2 Focus area: International students: support and wellbeing

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory 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.

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

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.

Maria Montessori Education Foundation is required to ensure compliance at all times with clause 16D (Process: insurance) of the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016 (including 2019 amendments).

Appendix

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 fraud⁷*
- *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.*

⁷ 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 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

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 including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, training schemes 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 2016. 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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