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External Evaluation and Review Report

Naturopathic College of New Zealand
Limited

Date of report: 13 October 2021

About Naturopathic College of New Zealand Limited

Naturopathic College of New Zealand (NCNZ) is a distance online provider of health science and naturopathy training at certificate, diploma and advanced diploma levels.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment
Location:	21-23 Devon Street East, New Plymouth
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 407; 228.875 equivalent full-time students; Māori 15 per cent; Pasifika 1 per cent; female 96 per cent International: nil
Number of staff:	14 full-time; four part-time
TEO profile:	NZQA - Naturopathic College of New Zealand Limited NCNZ is part of the Aspire2 Group domestic division alongside business management programmes (Cornerstone Education Ltd).
Last EER outcome:	NCNZ was found to be Confident in educational performance and Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment in 2017.
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand Certificate in Study and Career Preparation (Level 4) (Health Science) ID: C30926 (QC), 129 students• Advanced Diploma in Health Sciences (Naturopathy and Nutrition) (Level 7) ID: C32825 (QC), 85 students
MoE number:	8167
NZQA reference:	C45325
Dates of EER visit:	4 and 5 August 2021 (virtual)

Summary of Results

Overall, NCNZ performs very well on behalf of its students, though there remain opportunities for improvement. Systematic self-assessment processes are becoming more embedded and help inform the TEO's strategic direction.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Achievement rates across the focus area programmes are high, as benchmarked by internal and TEC measures.
- Internal and external moderation validates learner results within the programmes in scope, though some assessment problems have been identified by NZQA in another programme.
- The programmes in scope enhance the well-being of its students (a primary goal of many who enrol), and are well respected by the industry.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Successful completion of the level 4 entry certificate enables students to gain entry to level 5 and level 7 programmes respectively.
- Programme design remains a work in progress. A degree application was declined in early 2021, and an NZQA monitoring report noted some structural problems, which NCNZ is actively addressing
- Aspire2 delivers shared services such as governance, financial, marketing, human resources and educational leadership which, in the view of NCNZ's stakeholders, were very effective and harmonious.
- Specific self-assessment activities in 2021 include the development of continuous improvement projects, dependent on self-reflection. Despite these worthwhile initiatives and improvements, self-assessment within NCNZ is not yet fully embedded.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Course completions for the New Zealand Certificate in Study and Career Preparation (Level 4) averaged 82 per cent for 2017-19, meeting the internal NCNZ target (75 per cent) and the external Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) target for levels 1-4 of 80 per cent.</p> <p>Course completions for the Advanced Diploma in Health Sciences (Level 7) averaged 91 per cent (2017-19), also meeting both internal and external (TEC) targets. External post-assessment moderation for the programmes in focus met all requirements.</p> <p>New assessments or changes to assessment activities are pre-moderated internally by experienced moderators. New tutors and those teaching a programme for the first time are closely monitored and supported.</p> <p>Student progress is tracked through weekly staff meetings where results and completion targets are discussed, and support provided as needed.</p> <p>NZQA monitoring of the NZ Diploma in Health Science (Level 5) in January 2021 identified some problems with assessment and graduate profile outcomes. A new level 5 programme has since been approved by NZQA.</p>
Conclusion:	Student achievement meets internal and external achievement targets. Moderation outcomes affirm the validity of learner results with the exception of some in the NZ Diploma in Health Science (Level 5).

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

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Many students are motivated towards enrolling at NCNZ as part of their personal health journey. Others enrol to add value to an established profession, such as nursing, and/or to provide a more holistic approach to their work in the health field.</p> <p>Student feedback indicates that students build up useful skills and knowledge as part of their study. Other gains include increased self-esteem, improvements to wellbeing and more effective time management skills.</p> <p>Students share their enthusiasm about complementary healthcare with friends and family. During the Covid-19 lockdown students were able to continue the practical components of the advanced diploma programme by engaging family members as clients.</p> <p>Destination data shows that most level 7 graduates use their learning in employment in the wider health field, but that not all establish their own practices in naturopathy. The level 7 qualification is required to practise naturopathy. Student numbers have increased over the last four years, indicating that NCNZ programmes are relevant and add value to learners.</p> <p>The level 5 certificate programme does not lead to employment per se, but it may assist a student to decide whether they want to progress in complementary medicine. Greater understanding of why only 50 per cent of students progress from the level 4 to the level 5 programme is needed to determine the full value of the level 4 programme to students.</p>
Conclusion:	Students benefit personally and professionally from their study at NCNZ. However, transition rates from certificate to diploma study are not high. The reasons for this merit further investigation.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The flexibility of online programmes enables access to anyone with the time, motivation, tools and ability to learn online. A week-long induction aids student engagement and enables NCNZ to identify students who need extra support with navigating online. The learning management system is user-friendly for both students and staff. Tutors regularly monitor learner progress and check that students are appropriately prepared before they undertake assessments.</p> <p>The level 4 and level 7 programmes include face-to-face workshops in addition to online teaching and learning. Workshops provide opportunities to complete practical components of study and opportunities to socialise. They are highly valued by all stakeholders and often lead to ongoing contact for students.</p> <p>Industry engagement with key naturopathic associations and practitioners has led to selecting qualified industry mentors to support level 7 students through the practical components of the programme. Staff are valued and remain current by working in clinical practice, ensuring that industry knowledge informs teaching and learning.</p> <p>Te Ao Māori values are included within the programmes through te reo and tikanga content. Consultation with local iwi has led to a recent whānau group enrolment with the college, which in NZQA's view is a promising early step.</p> <p>However, NCNZ was unsuccessful with a degree approval application, and (as already noted) received a poor outcome for an NZQA monitoring report. Taken together, these failures indicate the need for further improvement in programme design. NCNZ has begun intensive remedial actions in this area.</p>
Conclusion:	Regular review cycles ensure effective oversight of the programmes in scope; less so in one programme. Stakeholder consultation has informed improvements to programme design and delivery.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Student attendance is monitored through the learning management system, and non-engagement leads to tutor contact, being put on an academic watch list, and the offer of additional academic support. Individual student progress is also tracked by all tutors through the learning management system.</p> <p>A newly appointed academic support person works one-to-one with the students. This person also provides tutorials on academic writing, referencing, information literacy, academic integrity and the e-library databases.</p> <p>Students understand their learning goals and how to access academic or IT support. Over time, different ways to get student feedback have been employed with varying degrees of success. Recently focused surveys with groups of priority learners (male students, Māori and Pasifika students) have been initiated. This data is yet to be analysed.</p> <p>NCNZ managed Covid-19 in 2020 very well. Support included provision of laptops, food vouchers, extensions to assessment dates and hardship vouchers. While some students were unable to continue with their study, due to family and personal reasons, NCNZ worked hard to reduce barriers to learning.</p> <p>Some students wanted greater access to each other. While this is a limitation of the online environment, NCNZ now administers a Facebook page where student contact can be encouraged and moderated. However, additional ways to increase student-to-student contact may be worth investigating.</p> <p>Support and involvement includes concern for all the factors that impact student learning including mental, physical, spiritual and whānau aspects.</p>
Conclusion:	Student support is appropriate and suited to each student's academic and social needs. Self-assessment has improved learner support. Ways to increase student to student involvement merit further review.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The Aspire2 strategic plan and the NCNZ strategic plan are understood and supported by NCNZ staff. This understanding includes how staff contribute to the strategic goals in each plan, through their key performance indicators. The Aspire 2 Māori Strategy 2021 has led to increased collaboration with local iwi. Staff understanding of Te Ao Māori and cultural awareness is enthusiastic and authentic.</p> <p>Aspire2 shared services (financial, marketing, human resources and educational leadership) support NCNZ management and staff to focus on educational achievement and the key contributing processes.</p> <p>Academic staff are valued. Examples include the organisation responding to identified needs, such as systematic reviews of workload and work conditions and professional development to increase NCNZ staff satisfaction and capability.</p> <p>Regular monthly reporting enables NCNZ to provide key information to the group office and Aspire2 board. This has built confidence and accountability between NCNZ and Aspire2 management and staff.</p> <p>NCNZ staff are active in the key associations involved in the naturopathic sector to ensure they are aware of industry developments and can influence possible impacts on education. Qualifications are recognised by each key association so students have recognised pathways.</p> <p>Continuous improvement projects in 2021 provide added focus and prioritise self-assessment activities and responsibilities for the year. Governance and management actively support educational achievement and staff initiatives.</p>
Conclusion:	Clear reporting structures have contributed to the development of effective relationships between Aspire2 and NCNZ. The balance of business and academic expertise supports and improves educational achievement.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>NCNZ has policies and practices that are legal and ethical. Aspire2 manages NZQA and Tertiary Education Commission compliance requirements to ensure that relevant rules and regulations are complied with. The Aspire2 finance officer manages financial sustainability.</p> <p>NCNZ course reviews include reviewing teaching resources and online module content to ensure they are relevant and meet industry needs, learning outcomes and graduate profile outcomes.</p> <p>Programme review spreadsheets take a holistic look at a programme and include course completions, course reviews, Type 1 and 2 changes notified to NZQA, survey and moderation data, professional development data, and feedback from industry groups. Teaching hours and entry criteria are also part of programme review. Reviews identify any actions required.</p> <p>The interim domestic Code of Practice has been self-reviewed and the required attestation provided to NZQA. The pastoral support offered is appropriate for the context of NCNZ programme delivery.</p>
Conclusion:	Aspire2's shared services with NCNZ are well managed. NCNZ has its own compliance procedures which are current and fit for purpose.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: New Zealand Certificate in Study and Career Preparation (Level 4) (Health Science)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	Course completions meet internal NCNZ and external TEC targets. However, greater understanding of the reasons for non-progression to the level 5 programme (currently at 50 per cent) would be useful to better understand the value of the level 4 programme to students.
Conclusion:	The level 4 programme supports students to study online and progress to level 5. The significance of student non-progression from level 4 to level 5 would benefit from further review.

2.2 Focus area: Advanced Diploma in Health Sciences (Naturopathy and Nutrition) (Level 7)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Course completions meet internal NCNZ and external TEC targets. Programme completion at level 7 provides entry to practising as a naturopath. Increased enrolments indicate that this programme has value and is meeting student needs well.</p> <p>NCNZ is currently building staff capacity and capability to reapply to NZQA for approval to deliver the Bachelor of Health Science (Complementary Medicine). NCNZ did not meet NZQA approval for degree delivery in 2020.</p>
Conclusion:	The level 7 programme adds value. It provides opportunities for clinical practice and pathways to employment. Gaining approval for degree level delivery will reinforce and enhance the ongoing relevance of NCNZ qualifications for students.

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.

NZQA recommends that Naturopathic College of New Zealand Limited consider:

- additional ways to maximise student-to-student contact during online study
- reviewing the reasons for non-progression from the certificate to diploma programmes.

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.

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

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 fraud²*
- 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.*

² 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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