# External Evaluation and Review Report

## Media Design School

Date of report: 6 December 2018

# About Media Design School

*Media Design School (MDS) focuses on producing graduates from sub-degree to postgraduate for the digital and creative technology industries. MDS programmes expose students to industry during their study and offer them opportunities such as projects, internships and global award competitions.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of organisation: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| Location: | Levels 14-20, 92 Albert Street, Auckland |
| Code of Practice signatory: | Yes. No students under 18 years of age were enrolled at the time of the external evaluation and review (EER). |
| Number of students: | Domestic: approximately 600 equivalent full-time students (New Zealand Māori 3 per cent, Pasifika 4 per cent, European 52 per cent, Asian 38 per cent, Other 3 per cent) |
| | International: approximately 200 equivalent full-time students from a wide range of countries |
| Number of staff: | 74 full-time; 17 part-time |
| TEO profile: | See: NZQA – Media Design School |
| | MDS is owned by Laureate Universities International. |
| Last EER outcome: | MDS's previous EER outcome in 2014 was Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment. |
| Scope of evaluation: | • Digital Creativity Foundation Programme |
| | • Bachelor of Media Design |
| | • Postgraduate Diploma in Design |
| | • International Student Support and Wellbeing |
| MoE number: | 8192 |
| NZQA reference: | C31206 |
| Dates of EER visit: | 25-27 September 2018 |

# Summary of Results

*MDS is a high quality, specialty provider which produces graduates who are sought after by employers and who immediately add value to the digital and creative technology economy.*

**Highly Confident in educational performance**

- There is clear and comprehensive evidence that MDS is providing quality education and training leading to positive outcomes for its students.

- Programme completion rates are high, well above national averages at every level.

- Excellent value is evident in graduates gaining relevant employment and/or engaging successfully in further study.

- Education is delivered in appropriate contexts for industry and student needs. Stakeholders confirm that MDS graduates are particularly well prepared for employment.

**Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment**

- Courses are taught by experienced, qualified teachers who use their industry experience and practical scenarios to ensure the education delivery is relevant and engaging.

- MDS is well managed and has a clear philosophy and purpose that is reflected throughout the organisation. The activities are well resourced and MDS uses its resources effectively. Important compliance accountabilities are being well managed.

- Records and discussions indicate that self-assessment is well embedded and has been practised for many years.

- Self-assessment is ongoing, authentic and transparent, and findings are used to bring about worthwhile improvements.

# Key evaluation question findings[1]

| 1.1 How well do students achieve? | |
|---|---|
| Performance: | **Excellent** |
| Self-assessment: | **Good** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | MDS students achieve excellent results. Course completion rates have consistently been above 96 per cent since 2013, for both domestic and international students. The retention rate of students across all programmes is very high. For instance, retention on the foundation programme exceeds 90 per cent, year on year, which is exceptional for a foundation programme.<br><br>High achievement is supported by good analysis of qualification completion, benchmarked nationally and internationally. However, analysis of the data by nationality and ethnicity is needed to understand outcomes better. As MDS's new student management system is bedded in, a greater level of 'slicing and dicing' of performance information for analysis will be possible.<br><br>The excellent level of graduate employment (discussed in the next section) is due, in part, to the focus that MDS has put on preparing graduates for the creative and digital workforce.<br><br>MDS lecturers monitor and supervise students on an individual basis ensuring that action is taken when any student falls behind. |
| Conclusion: | The EER team's interviews with students, MDS governance, management and staff, and a selection of key stakeholders, helped confirm the success, extent and benefits of the educational performance of MDS. However, analysis of the data by nationality and ethnicity is needed to understand outcomes better. |

---

[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: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | The organisation is strongly employment-focussed and committed to ensuring that students and the industry/profession receive good value from the courses and services they deliver. MDS engages exceptionally well with its industry and is highly valued for the contribution that it makes. For instance, 93 percent of 2016 graduates were in related employment or further study one year post-graduation. |
| | MDS management and staff know the immediate employment or further study destinations of all graduates and communicate with them regularly through a variety of media, both formal and informal, leading to improvements in practice. The exit and post-graduation interview processes are comprehensive and allow MDS to collect student feedback on the value of the training and their immediate career destinations on graduation. |
| | The partnership arrangements MDS has with industry organisations have enabled MDS and students to have ongoing engagement with employers, resulting in graduates who are well prepared for employment. |
| | The merit of MDS's programmes lies not only in the long-term professional outcomes for students, but also in the attributes (such as professionalism, confidence, communication, teamwork and positive attitudes) that students acquire on the courses. MDS has formalised the teaching of these characteristics into their programmes. |
| | MDS adds value to its community by, for instance, hosting school visits, participating in programmes for schools, and assisting local organisations and local government with community events. |
| Conclusion: | The most critical factor in MDS's success is being known to provide good value to its students, the creative and digital industry, and the community at large. Evidence from stakeholders, including students, indicates that MDS achieves this aim. |

## 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: | MDS's processes are effective in ensuring that industry and student needs are understood and met, and high standards are maintained. There is a high level of student satisfaction with the teaching and facilities.<br><br>Leading New Zealand studios contribute to the overall educational experience for students through provision of guest lectures, critiques of work, industry awards and financial scholarships, as well as participating in industry panels, course reviews and providing advice on trends and technological advances. This ensures that MDS's curricula provide students with the skills and knowledge that employers are looking for, not only when they graduate but as their career evolves.<br><br>MDS faculty have significant industry experience to draw from and seek regular feedback from students. Supported by faculty knowledge and industry feedback, this ensures not only effective student engagement in learning, but also confirms that both teaching and learning are current and relevant.<br><br>Well-organised and managed external and internal moderation verifies the validity and reliability of assessments at MDS.<br><br>MDS has both formal and informal connections to the industries relevant to their specialised areas of delivery. Representatives from the creative digital technology and design industry have contributed significantly to the development of the programmes and are part of ongoing review.<br><br>Students regularly complete feedback surveys to provide feedback on the learning methods, course delivery and learning environment. The results of this feedback are collated, analysed and used effectively to inform improvements to course delivery. |
| Conclusion: | A stand-out feature of the organisation is regular and ongoing interaction with stakeholders, ensuring that programmes and activities meet the existing and emerging needs of the students and stakeholders. |

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

| Performance: | **Excellent** |
|---|---|
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | Students and their families are well informed and understand the requirements of the programmes, not just from an eligibility standpoint but also in terms of what it means to be successful as a game developer or programmer or animator. |
| | Once enrolled, student engagement is fostered through a learning model that privileges, where possible, project-based learning. This is integrated into all MDS qualifications and ensures students develop the right skills and capabilities to be employment-ready. |
| | Student success is a collaborative effort. In-class support provided by faculty is augmented by referrals to counsellors to address student wellbeing concerns, or to the librarian who provides academic support. |
| | Most teaching staff are full-time which enables them to freely interact with each other and with students outside of class time. Teaching staff spoke about how they share ideas, experiences and knowledge through their regular interaction and sharing of office space. |
| Conclusion: | Students at MDS are appropriately and expertly supported, both socially and academically while studying, and even on entering the workforce. |

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

| Performance: | **Excellent** |
|---|---|
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | MDS's organisational strategy is formally documented, and management and staff have a common understanding of the organisation's vision and direction. This ensures the school's education provision responds to the needs of the creative design and technology industries.<br><br>The governing board provides input into and approval of MDS's strategic direction and business plans. The board also monitors and assesses its performance against these plans, ensures the plans align well with the New Zealand tertiary education environment, and approves and monitors capital management.<br><br>The organisation has embedded effective systems for monitoring student achievement and supporting staff to improve educational performance. MDS employs highly qualified and experienced staff, which it manages effectively and actively develops. The value that MDS management puts on the experience and know-how of the teaching team makes a positive difference to educational quality. The performance of the teaching staff is formally reviewed annually, but this does not preclude regular feedback of a formative nature.<br><br>The organisation is well equipped with physical and learning resources for the number of students it currently has. There are systems in place to monitor resourcing to ensure sufficient resources of current industry standard to meet the learning needs of the students.<br><br>MDS encourages reflection on its role and how to make ongoing and continuous improvements to meeting the needs of students and other stakeholders. Self-assessment is well led by management and is comprehensively understood and adopted throughout the organisation. |
| Conclusion: | MDS has strong leadership and a clear vision and understanding of its business. Monitoring of performance is regular, transparent and robust, resulting in highly effective support for educational achievement. |

## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

| | |
|---|---|
| Performance: | **Excellent** |
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | MDS policies and practices are informed by New Zealand legislation and regulations and NZQA compliance requirements, as well as Laureate International Education conduct requirements to ensure active and effective compliance and risk management.<br><br>NZQA attestations and returns have been met within required timeframes. The courses are being delivered consistent with NZQA approvals.<br><br>MDS leadership is proactive in managing areas for compliance, including Code of Practice obligations, programme approvals and funder requirements. Positive external quality assurance by a range of organisations attests to effective management of compliance responsibilities. |
| Conclusion: | MDS has a clear understanding of its compliance accountabilities and manages these effectively to ensure obligations are met. |

# Focus Areas

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

## 2.1 Focus area: Digital Creativity Foundation Programme (including the New Zealand Certificate in Arts and Design and the New Zealand Certificate in Creative Technology)

| Performance: | **Excellent** |
|---|---|
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |

## 2.2 Focus area: Bachelor of Media Design

| Performance: | **Excellent** |
|---|---|
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |

## 2.3 Focus area: Postgraduate Diploma in Design (including the Postgraduate Certificate in Design)

| Performance: | **Excellent** |
|---|---|
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |

## 2.4 Focus area: International Student Support and Wellbeing

| Performance: | **Excellent** |
|---|---|
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |

# 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.*

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 fraud[2]*

- *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 according to 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 for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

*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. The requirements are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016 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 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 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). The Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016 are available at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/qa-rules/external-evaluation-rules-2016/1/, 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/.*

# NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz