



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report



Pathways College of Bible and
Mission

Date of report: 25 September 2025

About Pathways College of Bible and Mission

Pathways College of Bible and Mission (Pathways) delivers practical theological education courses to develop leaders and workers for churches and parachurch organisations in Aotearoa and beyond.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	63 Waihi Road, Judea, Tauranga
Eligible to enrol international students:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 27 (21 equivalent full-time students in 2024); Māori one (4 per cent), Pasifika two (7 per cent) and disabled six (22 per cent) International: one (1 equivalent full-time student in 2024) ¹
Number of staff:	Five full-time equivalents
TEO profile:	Pathways College of Bible and Mission Most students enrol in the one-year, level 5 Christian ministry programme. Half of the delivery is internship with churches or parachurch organisations. Students also attend six one-week block courses and learn online.
Last EER outcome:	NZQA was Confident in the educational performance and Confident in the capability in self-assessment of Pathways College in June 2021.
Scope of evaluation:	New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Theological Studies) (Level 5) (123920)
MoE number:	8285
NZQA reference:	C61337
Dates of EER visit:	8-10 July 2025

¹ Four international students are enrolled in 2025.

Summary of results

Pathways is consistently meeting the most important needs of its students and key stakeholders. Some processes are highly effective, some are effective, and there are a few process gaps. Self-assessment is generally strong, contributing to some clear improvements.

Confident in educational performance

- Pathways is delivering clear and high-value outcomes for its students and key church stakeholders. The students contribute to church organisations in paid or voluntary roles. Most students complete their studies. Students learn relevant knowledge and skills which they apply in practice. However, there were some significant assessment and moderation concerns that have been progressively resolved. The results for the evaluation period were therefore not fully assured.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- The level 5 applied Christian ministry programme consistently meets the important needs of students and stakeholders. Some self-review processes are high quality. Pathways is developing an educational approach suited to the applied Christian ministry training context.
- Pastoral care reflects well Pathways' organisational values. The PTE's wraparound systems are highly effective in keeping students engaged and supporting their wellbeing.
- This work is a vocation for Pathways lecturers, staff and mentors, and internship partners. Lecturers are typically subject matter experts. The leadership is well connected to church networks. There is an effective ecosystem that enables important needs to be consistently met for students and key stakeholders.
- Pathways is generally effective in managing its important compliance accountabilities. There are a few compliance gaps that have had some impact.

-
- Some high-quality self-review processes insightfully inform decision-making and have brought improvements. Some processes have had to be strengthened (moderation practice and employer feedback on graduates). Some need further strengthening.

Key evaluation question findings²

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Most Pathways students enrol in the New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Theological Studies), which combines academic learning and applied ministry practicum. The qualification completion rate for 2021-24 is between 87 and 100 per cent.³ These are high rates. However, no benchmarking with similar hybrid distance programmes has been provided.</p> <p>Ten (83 per cent) of 12 Māori students gained the qualification, which is close to parity. Three of four Pasifika students completed.⁴ Pathways reported individual cases of students who disclosed disabilities, and who all completed. Pathways' level 6 programme commenced in 2023, and all five students from 2023 and 2024 have gained the qualification.</p> <p>Self-assessment of student achievement is generally strong. Pathways effectively tracks assessment and the course progression of individual students. NZQA identified some significant assessment and moderation practice gaps.⁵ While these have been progressively resolved, there is not full confidence in the results for the evaluation period.</p> <p>Spiritual and personal development are primary learning objectives for Pathway students and key stakeholders. Progress on these objectives is reported on individually in mentoring reports and exit interviews. However,</p>

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 See Appendix 1 for further details. The Tertiary Education Commission will be asked to comment on some discrepancies between the PTE and Ngā Kete qualification completion data for 2021 and 2022.

⁴ Low enrolment numbers have a disproportionate impact on completion rates.

⁵ See key evaluation question 3 for further details.

	Pathways does not systematically capture the breadth of this highly valued growth and learning.
Conclusion:	Students learn, develop and apply relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes. Most complete their intended studies. Self-assessment of student achievement is generally strong.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Pathways has a close relationship with the Christian Community Churches of New Zealand, its key community stakeholder. Church representatives contribute to Pathways' strategic and other decision-making. The PTE's board, staff and intern placements are woven through this church network. These multi-layered relationships enable the PTE to be highly responsive to stakeholders' important and evolving needs.</p> <p>Pathways has developed a notably strong relationship with a local iwi. This connection informs its robust bicultural practices and the co-design and delivery of its Theology in Context Aotearoa module.</p> <p>Pathways' key intended graduate outcomes are life skills development and character and spiritual growth, practical skills application, leadership development, strong ministry connections and workforce contribution. There is clear evidence that graduates are applying their skills in relevant paid or voluntary roles in church or parachurch organisations. They contribute to these organisations through taking on increasing responsibilities and developing their leadership capabilities. A few graduates are going on to further studies.</p> <p>The February 2025 NZQA consistency review confirmed that level 5 programme graduates are demonstrating the qualification's graduate profile outcomes. The review identified a need for more stakeholder feedback. The revised 2025 employer survey has addressed this gap. It captured that graduates make clear connections between biblical knowledge and bringing theological knowledge into</p>

	practical ministry situations. A similar graduate survey would offer deeper insights on the impact of the training. EER interviews supported these findings.
Conclusion:	Pathways is meeting well its key intended outcomes. The PTE delivers clear value to its students and key stakeholders. Self-assessment has been strong; some areas need attention.

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 level 5 programme is coherent, providing the necessary theological knowledge and relevant skills that underpin the practical application of ministry skills in church or parachurch settings. The hybrid block course, online learning and internships is a fit-for-purpose design. It suits students with a practical focus and those re-engaging with formal learning, while also offering a foundation for higher-level studies.</p> <p>Consistently high completions and positive course evaluation ratings indicate that the programme is meeting students' needs. Stakeholder feedback is strong. Pathways has effectively addressed a few cases where feedback indicated that issues needed to be resolved.</p> <p>Since the last EER, Pathways has developed a training pathway for students seeking more senior leadership roles. This is the New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Christian Leadership) (Level 6) programme (approved by NZQA in 2021). All five students of this programme have graduated and are in full-time ministry roles or further related study.</p> <p>An NZQA monitoring report (23 September 2024) found internal pre-assessment moderation had not been completed for an extended period, and that post-moderation issues had not been addressed. Students had not been able to demonstrate all the course learning outcomes. Pathways has progressively implemented the</p>

	<p>required action plan, which is close to completion. There are signs of more robust practices.</p> <p>Academic standards have been progressively strengthened. The 'Close the Loop' course review process has been enhanced. This includes more systematically drawing on a range of data, contributing to multiple improvements.</p> <p>The faculty appraisal process (including teacher observation) has also informed changes to the teaching culture since the last EER. Teaching practice is becoming more focused on student needs and their internship context; theological reflection has become more central, and assessment is more aligned to content. Scenario-based assessments are one example of improved practice.</p>
Conclusion:	Programmes have matched the important needs of students and other key stakeholders. Significant assessment and moderation gaps have been recently addressed. A range of strengthened self-review processes have informed improvements.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Pathways' core values of whanaungatanga, Christian service and partnership are visible in the pastoral care and support they provide. Pathways engages staff and internship partners who align with these values. The EER team heard that this work is a life vocation for these key stakeholders.</p> <p>Pathways shares pastoral care responsibilities with its internship partners. Many students bring prior social and spiritual networks from their home base/churches. Mentor agreements, role descriptions and manuals articulate who provides what support. On the practicum, internship mentors support students to apply their knowledge and skills, while personal mentors offer personal and spiritual support.</p>

	<p>Pathways' adjunct lecturers provide the primary academic guidance. Staff deepen their whanaungatanga with students during the delivery of the on-site, six-week block courses. The new assistant dean role explains academic expectations, tracks individual engagement and progress, and offers additional weekly one-on-one meetings to the international students. All four international students are engaged and completing their studies.</p> <p>A range of processes contribute to and review the support offered to the students in the form of mentoring meetings, quarterly reports and exit interviews. Student course evaluations rate the support received highly. The substantive 2024 Code of Practice review identified some areas that can be strengthened. Professional development has been provided to staff for better addressing students with learning disabilities. Pathways continues to enhance its te ao Māori cultural responsiveness.</p>
Conclusion:	High retention and completions and positive feedback confirm that the wrap-around pastoral care is highly effective in keeping students engaged and improving their wellbeing. Self-assessment is comprehensive and well embedded.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Pathways has a clear and established purpose of discipleship and leadership, reflected in its mission and values. A considered three-year strategic plan informs its annual objectives, and the board has reviewed its progress towards these goals. The PTE's representative board members have strong educational and relevant governance expertise. The senior leadership team has a coherent structure and a balance of complementary capabilities.</p> <p>Pathways has in place robust academic leadership which has systematically addressed the previously noted assessment and moderation concerns. The leadership has recruited and is developing an adjunct faculty whose members typically have a high level of subject matter</p>

	<p>expertise. The PTE has robust course review and academic performance appraisal processes. As noted,⁶ the leadership is developing an organisation-wide educational practice suited to the applied Christian ministry training context.</p> <p>This report has identified some high-quality self-review processes that inform decision-making and bring improvements. However, some areas have had to be strengthened, including moderation practice and employer feedback on graduates. Some other areas need further strengthening, including some compliance management and more systematic capture of student personal development. The trend is mostly upward, which is a sound foundation for the journey going forward.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>The leadership is effectively supporting educational performance that consistently meets the important needs of students and church stakeholders. There are some high-quality self-assessment practices and clear improvements. There were other areas that needed or need improvements.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Pathways has a structured quality assurance system, including a quality assurance manual and related policies that are reviewed. There is an academic board, health and safety committee, and a governing board with defined responsibilities. The board also has a risk management framework and plan. These coherent systems have produced generally effective compliance management. Key findings include that Pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gained approval for a new and revised level 6 programme. • Engaged as required in external monitoring, moderation and consistency review processes.

⁶ See key evaluation question 3.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertook a sound review of the Code of Practice for pastoral care involving key staff. Pathways reported no critical incidents and complaints but did not publish all the required information.⁷ They identified some areas for improvement. • Has formal up-to-date memoranda with its key education partners. • Is delivering the level 5 programme hours and content as approved by NZQA. • However, there were two gaps. Two of the four international students did not have the required overseas police vetting check. This item was missing from the enrolment procedures checklist.⁸ One student had insurance coverage that started the day after the official course start. The application had been submitted a week earlier. • The above issues are both programme entry requirements. They are breaches of NZQA Programme Approval, Recognition and Accreditation Rules 2025, Part 5, Section 13.1a.⁹
Conclusion:	Pathways is generally effective in managing its important compliance accountabilities. However, there were a few compliance gaps that had some impact. The PTE periodically reviews its management processes.

⁷ This information has now been added to the Pathways website.

⁸ Staff and domestic students were police vetted. After the EER enquiry, Pathways gained NZQA approval for international students who are resident in New Zealand to only require the New Zealand Police vetting.

⁹ See explanatory note in the Requirements section.

Focus areas

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

2.1 New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Theological Studies) (Level 5) (ID: 123920)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Conclusion:	This programme is consistently meeting the important needs of its students and key community stakeholders. Processes are mostly effective and some are highly effective. There are also a few gaps as noted in this report.

2.2 International student support and wellbeing

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Conclusion:	Only four international students have enrolled in the review period. They are all still completing their studies. These students are progressing like other students. They are well supported. The 2024 review of the pastoral care Code of Practice was robust and met NZQA requirements. There are a few compliance gaps that had some impact.

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 Pathways College of Bible and Mission:

- Explore how to more systematically capture the key outcomes of students developing valued life skills, character and personal development (key evaluation question 1).
- Develop a graduate feedback mechanism to better identify programme impact (key evaluation question 2).
- Revise international student enrolment procedures to include international police checks (key evaluation question 6).

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.

NZQA requires Pathways College of Bible and Mission to:

- Undertake an international police check of two of the currently enrolled international students. This is an entry requirement for the New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Theological Studies) (Level 5) (123920) programme. This is a requirement under NZQA Programme Approval, Recognition and Accreditation Rules 2025, Part 5, Section 13.1a.¹⁰

¹⁰ Pathways has taken corrective action. Pathways has sought and gained NZQA approval (7 August 2025) that any future international students will only require New Zealand Police vetting if they are resident in New Zealand. The four students concerned were all residing in New Zealand.

Appendix 1

A. New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Theological Studies) (Level 5) (123920) course completion rates 2022-24

Course Code	Course	2021		2022		2023		2024	
		Student Count	Successful Completions	Student Count	Successful Completions	Student Count	Successful Completions	Student Count	Successful Completions
MIN510A	Supervised Ministry Training	34	34	18	17	16	14	19	18
MIN510B	Extended Supervised Ministry Training	34	32	20	19	14	12	12	12
MIN520	Negotiated Ministry Practice	34	33	20	20	15	13	17	17
THEOL501	Christian History	34	34	20	19	14	12	18	18
THEOL502	Interpreting the Bible	34	34	19	17	15	14	17	17
THEOL503	Biblical Survey	34	33	21	19	13	11	17	17
THEOL504	Theology	34	33	19	17	15	13	15	15
THEOL505	The Life of Christ	34	34	21	19	12	10	17	17

Qualification Completion Rates 2021 to 2024 - Level 5

New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Theological Studies) (Level 5)		
2021	32 Students	96.97%
2022	17 Students	89.47%
2023	13 Students	86.67%
2024	12 Students	100.00%

Information retrieved from SDR (2021 - 2024)

B. New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Christian Leadership) (Level 6) 127061 course completion rates 2023-24

Course Code	Course	2023		2024	
		Student Count	Successful Completions	Student Count	Successful Completions
DCL601	Leadership: Biblical Principals & Models	3	3	6	6
DCL602	Leadership: Identity and Calling	3	3	6	6
DCL603	Relational Leadership: Empowering, Ethical & Inclusive	3	3	6	6
DCL604	Working with Groups (Placement)	3	3	6	6
DCL605	Leading in a Digital and Secular Culture	3	3	3	3
DCL606	Leadership in Context (Placement)	3	3	2	2
DCL607	Strategic, Missional & Resilient Leadership	3	3	3	3

Qualification Completion Rates 2021 to 2024 - Level 6

New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies (Christian Leadership) (Level 6)		
2021	N/A	
2022	N/A	
2023	3 Students	100.00%
2024	2 Students	100.00%

Information retrieved from SDR (2021 - 2024)

C. Māori and Pasifika qualification completion rates 2021-24 – levels 5 and 6

Māori/Pasifika Qualification Completion 2021-2024							
		Māori Students		Pasifika Students		Total	
		Students	Completed	Students	Completed	Students	Completed
2021	Level 5	8	8	1	1	9	9
	Level 6	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	8	8	1	1	9	9
2022	Level 5	2	1	2	2	4	3
	Level 6	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	2	1	2	2	4	3
2023	Level 5	2	2	1	0	3	2
	Level 6	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	2	2	1	0	3	2
2024	Level 5	1	0	0	0	1	0
	Level 6	0	0	1	0	1	0
	Total	1	0	1	0	2	0
		13	11	5	3	18	14

Appendix 2

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 fraud¹¹*
- 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.*

¹¹ 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 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

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 excluding universities, and*
- maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, micro-credentials 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 2022. 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/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz