

Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Zealand College of Chiropractic

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 26 June 2013

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..... | 5 |
| Summary of Results | 6 |
| Findings | 8 |
| Recommendations | 17 |
| Appendix | 18 |

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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

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| Name of TEO: | New Zealand College of Chiropractic (NZCC) |
| Type: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| Location: | 6 Harrison Road, Mt Wellington, Auckland |
| First registered: | 2 February 1997 |
| Courses currently delivered: | Bachelor of Chiropractic (Level 7) |
| Code of Practice signatory: | Yes, for students 18 years and upwards |
| Number of students: | Domestic: 215, mostly Pakeha, 19 Māori and Pasifika, approximately equal numbers of males and females International: 30, from Australia, Korea, Canada, United States, India, Singapore, Burma, Europe and Scandinavia, Iran, Japan and China; most under 30 years of age |
| Number of staff: | 50 staff – 35.16 FTE (full-time equivalent) (30 full-time (.7 FTE or greater) and 20 part-time, plus 18 on contract) |
| Scope of active accreditation: | Bachelor of Chiropractic (Level 7) |
| Distinctive characteristics: | NZCC operates from rented premises and is owned and governed by the New Zealand Chiropractic Education Trust. It is accredited to teach one qualification only, Bachelor of Chiropractic, a four-year, full-time programme. |

NZCC's mission is: 'to provide an inspired educational programme that graduates chiropractic leaders committed to the highest standards of professional excellence in the philosophy, science and art of chiropractic'. This mission is supported by the core values of gratitude, integrity, vision, excellence and love. NZCC's campus includes a chiropractic centre which is used for the clinical practice requirements of years 3 and 4 of the Bachelor of Chiropractic. At the chiropractic centre, students have appointments with members of the public who are paying patients. All these appointment visits are supervised by registered chiropractors who are members of NZCC staff. There is also a centre of research that undertakes research at NZCC and internationally. It is staffed by three full-time researchers and one administration staff member.

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| Recent significant changes: | The president resigned in March 2013 and the board chair is acting as interim director until a new appointment is made. |
| Previous quality assurance history: | NZCC met all the requirements of the NZQA audit in 2009, including all Code of Practice requirements. |
| Other: | NZCC is the only educational organisation offering a chiropractic degree in New Zealand. It has close links with other colleges of chiropractic in Australia and North America. |

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected were the mandatory focus areas of governance, management and strategy, and international student support. The programme focus area selected was the Bachelor of Chiropractic, the only qualification offered by NZCC.

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-eeer/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.

The evaluation team consisted of a lead and an externally contracted evaluator and was conducted over two days at the NZCC campus. The evaluators spoke with the interim president, vice-president academic affairs, vice-president operations, the director of the centre for chiropractic research, and the director of the chiropractic centre. The team also spoke with the admissions officer, the director of the techniques department, the student support counsellor, a small group of lecturers and students from years 1 to 4 of the Bachelor of Chiropractic degree. The lead evaluator spoke with the chair of the stakeholder advisory committee and the recently resigned NZCC president. The evaluators also sighted a range of documentation, including the NZQA monitor's report, the NZCC quality management system, curriculum documents, reports from the New Zealand Chiropractic Education Trust Board, the chiropractic centre manual for 2013, a report from the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF), the NZCC work plan for 2013, the NZCC strategic plan, admissions and prerequisite checklists, student evaluations of courses and lecturers and minutes from staff and academic meetings.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **New Zealand College of Chiropractic**.

Course completion rates since 2003 for the Bachelor of Chiropractic degree are on average 95 per cent. Eighty per cent of students complete the four-year degree within four years, although a student may take up to 10 years to complete the qualification. Attrition rates are very low, indicating that, once enrolled, the majority of students are committed to completing the degree. The rates of graduate employment are high, with an average of 93 per cent of graduates gaining related employment within six months of graduation. The staff at NZCC are experienced and well-qualified chiropractors, although not all of them have prior teaching experience or training in adult education. The recent resignation of the president has not affected delivery of the degree programme, but until a new president is appointed NZCC is in a management transition phase.

Domestic and international students choose NZCC as a place to study as a result of recommendations from the sector and because the college has a reputation for offering tuition across a broader range of chiropractic techniques or modalities than other colleges. The broad curriculum allows students to gain skills that prepare them for a wide range of employment options both in New Zealand and overseas. The chiropractic centre on campus provides senior students with a simulated and supervised workplace experience, where they find their own clients and provide them with treatment. Employers know that graduates from NZCC are work-ready as they have treated a wide range and large number of patients to meet the clinical requirements for their degree.

A review of the college's strategic plan was undertaken in 2012, but it is to be reviewed again this year as management is not satisfied with the new plan. While the centre has increased its capacity and has a full programme of research, currently there is very limited research activity by the college's full-time teaching staff, although some are keen to be more involved in research.

A curriculum review in late 2012 has improved the content of the degree, but its quick implementation in early 2013 has caused issues for both students and staff. These issues are expected to be short-term. However, until NZCC has had the opportunity to review a full cycle of the new curriculum, it is not possible to be more than confident in the educational performance of NZCC.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **New Zealand College of Chiropractic**.

Students evaluate their lecturers and course content and other aspects of the degree programme regularly, and the evaluation team noted that student feedback was comprehensive and specific. This feedback has led to some course improvements; however, students noted that the delivery of course content across lecturers did not always support staircasing of knowledge well, and feedback about less-than-satisfactory teaching in one course had not been sufficiently addressed. The board reviews its own performance annually, and regular performance reviews are undertaken. The college has some structures for using review information to inform programme revision.

The recent resignation of the president has not affected the delivery of the degree programme, but until a new president is appointed NZCC is in a transition phase. The on-site centre for research has the primary responsibility for leading the research functions of the college and is well regarded internationally. The evaluation team noted that the centre for research was not as well connected as it might be with NZCC academic staff and the research possibilities offered by the chiropractic centre, and has accordingly made some recommendations in this report.

NZCC is monitored by a range of external agencies, including NZQA, the Tertiary Education Commission and the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia, and has consistently met the key performance indicators for these organisations.

While self- assessment is used to make ongoing improvements, it is not well understood across all staff members, or embedded in the organisation or sufficiently integrated coherently across the different parts of the organisation for NZQA to be highly confident in the capability in self-assessment of NZCC.

Findings¹

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 **Good**.

Achievement records dating from 2003 show that course completion at NZCC is on average 95 per cent and that 80 per cent of students complete the four-year Bachelor of Chiropractic degree within four years. However, a student is permitted to take up to 10 years to complete the qualification. Rates of graduate employment are high, with an average of 93 per cent of graduates gaining related employment within six months of graduation. Because of the shortage of trained chiropractors in New Zealand and overseas, some students are offered jobs in their last year of study prior to graduation.

Entry to the degree is granted after successful completion of a recognised pre-science entry year, usually from Auckland University of Technology. However, there are a number of ways of gaining entry, including recognition of prior learning. The attrition rate in the years 2008-2012 was equivalent to 10 equivalent full-time students, indicating that, once enrolled, the majority of students are committed to completing. The degree is an applied one with practical hands-on experience in classrooms and the chiropractic centre. NZCC prefers to have a 1:10 teacher-to-student ratio for practical classes. In the past the ratio has been 1:15, depending on the number of students in any particular year. For example, there are currently 75-80 year 4 students, and there are fewer students in subsequent years (60 in year 3, 50 in year 2 and 55 in year 1). The chiropractic centre has an average ratio of 1:7 for the students in the internship.

Students evaluate their lecturers and course content regularly, and the evaluation team noted that student feedback was comprehensive and direct, with students expressing any dissatisfaction openly. This feedback has led to some improvements, for example changing the system of examination re-sits from occurring in the holiday break to the first week of the next semester, and modifying the courses on research methods.

NZCC can track graduate destinations for people who practise in New Zealand, but this is more difficult to achieve for graduates who go overseas, unless they keep in touch with NZCC via Facebook or email. The alumni is active, but informal networking in a relatively small profession is the way most contact is maintained.

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

As a result of a loss of data when transferring from one student management system to another, NZCC does not have any accurate achievement data prior to 2003. This means that it cannot be accurate about qualification completion rates as a student may still be completing in 2013. External benchmarking is also problematic as NZCC is the only provider of its type in New Zealand. However, NZCC is monitored by a range of external agencies, including NZQA, the Tertiary Education Commission and the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia, and consistently meets the key performance indicators for these organisations concerning learner achievement.

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 **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Students choose NZCC as a place to study as a result of referral from their personal chiropractor, word of mouth from current practitioners and past graduates and because the college has a reputation for offering tuition in a range of chiropractic techniques or modalities. The broad curriculum allows students to gain skills that prepare them for a wide range of employment options both in New Zealand and overseas.

NZCC contributes to the local and international community, through free clinics offered at markets and sporting events and by overseas initiatives such as the 2011 chiropractic abroad programme in the Pacific, involving 45 interns and 10 faculty staff who conducted over 1,000 patient visits over one week.

The chiropractic centre on campus provides year 3 and 4 students with a simulated and supervised workplace experience. Students have to find their own clients across various patient groups approved by the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia, and provide them with appropriate treatment. Employers know that graduates from NZCC are work-ready as they have treated a range of patients (500 in total, double the requirement from other schools) to meet the clinical requirements of their degree.

NZCC regularly surveys stakeholders about the relevance of the degree programme and is proactive in taking initiatives to attract students. An example of this is the memorandum of understanding developed recently with a South Island institute of technology. The aim is to increase access opportunities for students outside the North Island to a pre-clinical course in their own city.

All the clinical work at the chiropractic centre has to be supervised by a faculty member who is a registered chiropractor. The evaluation team had some concerns about the teacher and learner workloads involved as part of the clinical requirements, with students expressing the stress this caused and that, as a result,

it was difficult to maintain a consistently high standard of performance. However, the added value of this requirement to employers and graduates in securing employment is acknowledged. Also, the involvement of the entire NZCC faculty in the supervision of students in the clinical programme allows staff to observe strengths and weaknesses in the practice of these senior students and facilitate ways to address them.

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 **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The learning environment at NZCC is planned and structured to meet the learning needs of learners, and the college's curriculum focus suits the students who choose to study here. The campus is modern and well equipped, with a gym and cafe available to students and local organisations resident in the area.

All stakeholders contacted by the evaluation team, including students, were satisfied with the quality of the programme and endorsed the high regard with which the degree is held both in New Zealand and overseas. Students consistently commented that they were being taught by 'world-renowned experts', and that NZCC has an excellent reputation among practising chiropractors. Input from employers through the stakeholder advisory committee, attendance by some NZCC staff at overseas conferences and research undertaken in the centre for research provide informal input to the content of the degree programme.

However, the evaluation team noted that clinical faculty members were not as involved with research as would be expected for a degree programme, and that this is an area that needs increased focus by NZCC. Teachers interviewed were not aware of a formal mechanism for initiating research in collaboration with the research centre. On the other hand, the employment of students as research assistants at the research centre is an excellent way to involve students in the life of the college, hone their evaluative skills and, in some cases, provide new lecturers for NZCC. The centre for research also runs occasional faculty workshops and a journal club, and the research centre director is one of five people on the World Federation of Chiropractic Research Council, representing Australasia, indicating that this person's research skills are recognised by colleagues.

Clinical staff have requirements to meet for ongoing registration. Meeting these requirements assures the individual faculty members, their colleagues and the NZCC board that the teaching staff are meeting the practice standards of the quality assurance body for chiropractors.

While programme planning is informed by ongoing needs analysis, the evaluation team noted that the centre for research seemed to be isolated from the teaching staff and that opportunities for applied research using the chiropractic centre had not been significantly developed. In addition, female students noted that the gym did not provide facilities suitable for women, and students generally commented that the library is not open sufficient hours to meet their needs for the high study workload required by the programme, while internet access is of variable quality.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Adequate**.

Academic staff at NZCC are passionate about training competent practitioners in the chiropractic field. They are well supported by the college, but the hours teachers reported as working seemed very long, with few if any staff working a standard 40-hour week. While the evaluation team accepts that the academic year has peaks and troughs, consistently working outside contracted agreed hours of work exposes NZCC to risk and possible penalties under current health and safety legislation, irrespective of whether people are voluntarily working these hours. Finding a balance between passion for the field and reasonable workloads across the teaching staff requires further attention as it may be having an impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

The outcome of the 2012 curriculum review has improved the degree content. For example, critical thinking and how to find literature and make sense of it has been introduced to students earlier in the programme, but the implementation of curriculum changes has had issues. For example, it has had a detrimental impact on year 2 students as they have been affected by content changes to the programme. This issue is acknowledged by NZCC, and the evaluation team accepted that this seemed to be a short-term effect. However, the evaluators were concerned that the quick implementation of the new curriculum had caused teaching and learning issues, such as insufficient time for lecturers to notify assessment topics and due dates, leading to added stress for both teachers and learners.

Students across all years also commented that coherence between courses was not always good, with coordination of topics and sequential staircasing of knowledge not always logical, leading to the need for teachers and learners to spend extra time recapping the important foundational knowledge required to fully understand a principle.

However, students noted that the quality of most of the teaching was of a high standard and that all teachers had good knowledge and experience and that teachers who did not have good teaching skills were in the minority. While there is

a policy that all lecturers who teach full-time are required to undertake adult education training, the uptake of this policy seemed variable across the academic staff.

Learners have opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts, particularly in the last two years of the degree when they are involved in the chiropractic centre. Assessment provides learners and teachers with useful feedback on progress, although some students commented that some assessments are returned after three weeks and that this was too late to influence learning. Other gaps identified by students were the limited opening hours of the college library, the lack of an intranet system where they could keep track of their grades, and that the large amount of assessment in some courses was detrimental to consistently producing high-quality work.

NZCC has focused on developing a system of internal and external moderation that ensures that assessment is valid, sufficient and fair, including sharing some external moderation with the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia. The system of pre- and post-moderation developed in response to the NZQA monitor's report is comprehensive, and the key timelines in the moderation process are triggered by an administration person, assisting academic staff to meet these deadlines.

The college has processes for identifying poor teaching practice from student feedback and has procedures for following this up with individual teachers, although some students felt that the process is too time-consuming. International students for whom English is a second or third language commented that terminology used in exam questions was sometimes esoteric and not clarified for them in the course of the exam. Lecturers are encouraged to ask for 'real-time' feedback from students at the end of lectures to check for understanding of concepts and provide an opportunity for immediate discussion and recap of important knowledge. The academic manager is responsible for performance reviews of academic staff, although staff commented that these had not always occurred annually, and not all teaching staff interviewed had a professional development plan. There is no requirement for full-time staff to undertake research or publishing. Staff assessment processes collectively identify gaps and the budget determines the professional development offered. Teaching at NZCC is mostly effective but some academic staff require more active support around teaching techniques and the principles of adult education.

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 **Good**.

Learner guidance and support at NZCC is effective, both pre-entry and during study. For example, there are appropriate systems in place for assessing that students have the necessary prerequisites for entry to the degree, and admission procedures are well organised. Most international students have reasonable English, which assists with initial contact and interviewing for admission to the college.

All students know who to contact for particular issues and reported that they would be happy to approach the member of staff responsible for counselling, if needed. The counsellor is a member of the management team and refers students to outside expertise if an issue is beyond the expertise available on site. The most common problem identified by the counsellor was loneliness among international students. The college attempts to manage this by having a thorough orientation programme, encouraging a 'family focus' and by emphasising the guiding values underpinning the school culture, such as gratitude and love.

Practical solutions to loneliness include peer tutors, mentors who mentor the year beneath them, one-to-one staff time with all year 1 students, peer tutoring and a system of class representatives. In addition, all staff have key performance indicators about being available and approachable to students outside of class time, and this expectation was affirmed by students, as was the 24-hour turnaround of responses from staff to students' emails. There are also several properties near the campus that international students can rent. These were seen by staff as particularly suitable for new arrivals in New Zealand.

Several students noted that some material in exam papers is culturally bound, for example rugby terminology, and that this could be a barrier to learning. This was not considered a major barrier to completing the exam paper successfully, but it is an issue that merits consideration when exam papers are pre-moderated in the future. Another way the college minimises barriers to learning is by allowing students to take fewer courses and spreading the degree over more years. The maximum period for completion of the degree is 10 years, although NZCC plans to reduce this to eight years to ensure the qualification obtained over the longer period remains current.

The college expects 100 per cent attendance for all students, and any non-attendance is reported and followed up promptly. If a student fails an assessment, they must discuss this with NZCC so an action plan can be formulated to address the area of failure and enhance the possibility of future success. There is a first-year survey at mid-term, incentivised by a \$50 voucher to encourage students to complete it, and the college responds promptly and appropriately to any pastoral care issues that might arise.

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

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The management team at NZCC describes the governing board as inspirational in its vision for the college, with a clear ideology, mission and vision and that it is 'student-centred'. The board is relatively large, with nine to 13 members; an academic member has joined the board recently. Two weeks before the EER, the president resigned. However, a long-standing board member has stepped into this role in the interim. While board members have had some governance training, staff commented that more training might be useful. Moreover, the teaching staff interviewed were not aware of the composition of the board and there were no formal structures for staff to meet board members, nor to have input into governance.

The effectiveness of the governance and management at NZCC has been affected by some confusion between the governance and operational roles at NZCC, specifically that the strategic plan was considered by the current management team to be too high-level, and the relationship between the strategic plan and the operational goals of the college was unclear. It is hoped that a planning day in June 2013, which will include staff input to the strategic plan, will help to overcome this issue.

The management team at NZCC has been very active recently, having reviewed all of the quality management system. This has led to policy changes to bring the system into line with current practice. These changes have been ratified by the board. The board has internal audits and is regularly audited externally by the Charities Commission. The senior management team, or 'round table', does not self-review in any formal or structured way. Management supports staff with professional development, attendance at conferences and ongoing registration costs. There is a genuine attempt by management to provide teaching resources and staffing that give students the best learning opportunities, but this aim is limited by some current financial issues relating to student numbers, which have prevented management from funding innovations such as the introduction of an intranet. Some individual management and teaching staff have contributed to a solution through fundraising, for example for the provision of up-to-date digital x-ray machinery.

There is a comprehensive system of meetings, including monthly staff meetings, where student progress and milestones are discussed. The meeting minutes sighted by the evaluation team were comprehensive and action-oriented. NZCC management has identified skill gaps with teaching practice and encourages part-time staff to undertake the Certificate in Adult Education at Massey University. The

majority of clinical staff continue to practise outside the college, either in their own clinic or with others. This keeps them up to date with current business practices and market needs, informs their teaching practice and maintains credibility with students and colleagues.

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 **Good**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Bachelor of Chiropractic (Level 7)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: International student support

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that the New Zealand School of Chiropractic:

- Review the workload for both students and staff of the clinical requirements for years 3 and 4 of the degree in the chiropractic centre.
- Review the involvement of academic staff in the centre for chiropractic research outputs and the possible research synergies between the centre for chiropractic research and the chiropractic centre.
- Review professional development opportunities for academic staff in adult education and develop a plan to upskill staff in this area.
- Review the assessment timetable for the degree papers to determine the best number and mix of assessments required to meet student learning outcomes.

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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