



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report

Premier Institute of Education Limited

Date of report: 28 September 2023

About Premier Institute of Education Limited

Premier Institute of Education (Premier) has been in operation since 1995. All five campuses operate salons designed to support students' preparation for entering the fields of hairdressing, barbering, nails technology or beauty therapy. Premier was purchased by The Skills Organisation Incorporated in 2022. There have been changes to management and other roles; some specialist services are now provided directly by the larger group.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	529 Lake Road, Takapuna, Auckland
Eligible to enrol international students:	Yes, but no international enrolments.
Number of students:	There were 165 students enrolled at the time of scoping this EER (and 190 at the time of the PTE's Code of Practice self-review in October 2022); 24 per cent Māori, 11 per cent Pasifika, 14 per cent declared a disability. EFTS (equivalent full-time students) have varied year on year due to the Covid pandemic and the changes at the PTE.
Number of staff:	20 full-time and five part-time equivalents
TEO profile:	Premier Institute of Education (provider page on NZQA website)
Last EER outcome:	In 2019, NZQA was Confident in the PTE's educational performance and Confident in its capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand Certificate in Beauty Therapy (Level 4) (ID 121612)• New Zealand Certificate in Commercial Barbering (Level 4) (ID 126699)
MoE number:	8473
NZQA reference:	C52805
Dates of EER visit:	9, 10 and 12 May 2023

Summary of results

Premier's new governance and management is performing effectively. There is good evidence of revitalisation, new initiatives and improvement to the educational offering. The PTE's purpose and direction is increasingly clear and there is improved communication with students and staff. Student achievement is variable across campuses for all student groups. Self-assessment impacts are still emerging.

Confident in educational performance	<p>The Skills Organisation and Premier staff have been working through the need and challenge of harmonising two PTEs¹ into a newly established group. Business and strategic self-assessment has been a key focus, including appraisal of sites, staffing, system harmonisation and rationalisation.</p> <p>Student achievement shows variability from site to site and cohort to cohort. Priority learner group achievement is also variable, and there is disparity between cohorts. In some cohorts, retention and success is high. The pandemic-related disruptions have affected the employment outcomes of some cohorts.</p>
Confident in capability in self-assessment	<p>Tutors and other staff have provided most of the support to the students at the campuses. The Skills Organisation has boosted this by adding Māori and Pasifika staffing and focused visits by these staff to all sites. There is strengthened face-to-face supportive engagement with the students. These relatively new resources are founded on a coherent strategy, showing evidence of organisational commitment and the capability of the role holders. Benefits of this are already becoming evident.</p> <p>Students report satisfaction with the teaching, the delivery of their programme, the facilities and learning activities. The introduction of weekly goal-setting is one key improvement of particular note.</p> <p>Self-assessment is comprehensive and increasingly effective. Some limitations were noted in the depth and</p>

¹ The Skills Organisation Incorporated purchased Harrington Vaughan Academy on 1 January 2022 and Premier Institute of Education on 30 April 2022. The decision to merge Harrington Vaughan under the Premier umbrella was made in July 2022, supported by both NZQA, the Tertiary Education Commission and the workforce development council.

quality of some important areas. Many of these gaps had already been identified by the PTE.

Key evaluation question findings²

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Of the 2022 enrolments in beauty therapy at the Hawke’s Bay, Wellington, Takapuna and Dunedin campuses, 24 students (77 per cent) completed their qualification. The highest achieving cohort was in Dunedin where nine completed (90 per cent), and the lowest achieving cohort was Hawke’s Bay³, where one student completed (33 per cent). The level 5 New Zealand Diploma in Beauty Therapy has an over 90 per cent qualification completion rate and no withdrawals from the 18 enrolments at time of the evaluation.</p> <p>For the barbering programmes – at both level 3 and the new level 4 qualification – 103 students completed their qualification (74 per cent) between 2019 and 2022. That data also shows improved completion rates for both Māori and Pasifika learners in the same period.</p> <p>Achievement by Tertiary Education Strategy priority group learners is variable. Premier’s analysis is that across all programmes, the overall qualification completion rate in 2019-22 was 62 per cent for Māori learners, 77 per cent for Pasifika learners, and 67 per cent for other ethnicities. The range of completion for Māori was 55 per cent in 2020, improving to 67 per cent in 2022.⁴ There is disparity between Māori and other learner groups, which Premier is addressing. There is some discussion in Premier’s self-assessment material of disabled learner needs and approaches to support, but as yet there is no comprehensive analysis of achievement data for this priority group.</p> <p>Students are acquiring useful technical skills and knowledge. The qualifications and content are current. Graduates can also</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 The Hawke’s Bay campus has since been closed.

⁴ Note on data: the overall rate appears to be an ‘average-of-averages’ calculation which is somewhat unreliable but gives an overall view.

	<p>demonstrate important 'soft skills' such as teamwork, collaboration and confidence to work with customers.</p> <p>Premier has grouped and analysed achievement data year on year and programme by programme. The PTE compares achievement against other tertiary education organisations, the broad field of study, and all learner groups by ethnicity. Analysis of achievement is reasonably comprehensive.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Managers and tutors have a sound, shared understanding of achievement. There is good information available to them through the student management system. Staff monitor and discuss each student's progress regularly. The whole organisation is strongly committed to helping each student achieve a qualification. Gaps and limitations in achievement are mostly explainable (for example, the pandemic has been disruptive), and work is in progress to address these.</p>

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>For the beauty therapy focus area programme, outcomes data collected by Premier's tutor shows a variable but increasing number of graduates are 'employed in a related field': 2021 Newmarket 30 per cent, Takapuna 22 per cent; 2022 Newmarket 75 per cent, Takapuna 100 per cent.</p> <p>For the focus area barbering programme, outcomes data collected by Premier's tutor shows a good number 'employed in a related field': Takapuna graduates 71 per cent; Wellington 57 per cent; Dunedin 60 per cent. The sole Hawke's Bay graduate also found related employment. A significant number of graduates also found employment in unrelated fields. For the barbering programmes at levels 3 and 4, about 21 students, or almost a quarter, left the programme unqualified in the 2019-22 period. This represents a poor use of the government's fees free study opportunity for many of them.</p> <p>Premier's analysis is that the pandemic has initially had a hard impact on the small businesses that typically employ the graduates. Premier has strengthened its focus on student outcomes. This was evident in discussions with staff across the</p>

	<p>PTE, and by considering minutes of meetings and the development of better methods for graduate tracking.</p> <p>Genuine efforts are made to track graduate outcomes.⁵ There are some limitations in data and Premier is yet to develop a comprehensive picture of the value-add to graduates or the industry. New or tweaked processes for gathering outcomes data and enhancing the scope and robustness of it are now being implemented.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>The data provided in Premier's self-assessment does not currently present a clear picture of graduates consistently moving into related employment soon after becoming qualified. However, the broader context is one of Covid-19 impacting on a highly practical, human-touch training model. Lockdowns affected these industries, with low or no recruitment during some of the period within the scope of this evaluation. This has been factored into the performance rating. Regardless, ensuring a better understanding and analysis of employment and other outcomes is a work in progress under the new ownership.</p>

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>Premier aims to meet the needs of the barbering and beauty therapy industries, which leads to positive alignment with the learning needs of the students. Although the 'commercial salon' approach to programme delivery has often been disrupted by lockdowns, it remains a positive and fundamental aspect of Premier's programme design.</p> <p>Learning activities are purposefully organised and focussed on the stated learning outcomes. Premier regularly reviews and updates important tutor and student-facing course outlines, record books and the student handbook. Internal and external moderation systems provide some assurance of the validity of achievement.</p>

⁵ 'The tutors hold this information and then at the 3, 6, 9, 12 and 18-month post-graduation mark the tutor follows up with the student and where possible, their employer, to see where the student has progressed to.' Premier Self-assessment Summary p.13

	<p>The introduction of weekly goal-setting meetings between each student and their tutor is a point of improvement. This has reportedly also lifted attendance and engagement. The student management system contains information on each student's progress and support, but this is not yet used powerfully or actively to guide support decisions and interventions.</p> <p>The 2023 student evaluation of tutors is mainly positive, and used a credible online, anonymous approach. Managers have suitable insights into students' learning experiences. Student representatives are also a useful point of communication.</p> <p>NZQA has some concerns arising from national external moderation of Premier's programmes. Core Skills assessment evidence did not meet requirements in 2021 and 2022. Premier has since put in place an action plan. This is a small proportion of the total number of assessments. External moderation by other external moderators mostly meets requirements (see also Appendix 1).</p> <p>There is evidence through various records, curriculum material and meeting minutes that students' needs and points of view are considered in decisions. Academic quality measures are applied well, and there is now suitable oversight and regulation by management of the quality of delivery. It is unclear that this would have been the case consistently across campuses even one year ago. The trend towards improvement is apparent.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Premier has a positive track record of delivering core subjects. There are sufficient qualified teaching staff and other expertise to deliver both focus area programmes well. Stakeholders endorsed the facilities which are currently in place. There is also renewed investment in facilities and resources. Current students report satisfaction with the teaching, their programme plan and related activities. Self-assessment is increasingly effective.</p>

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

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Until recently, student support has primarily been provided by tutors on each campus. The Skills Organisation Incorporated has boosted this by introducing Māori and Pasifika staffing and targeted visits to sites and face-to-face engagement with the students. There is a clearly stated, coherent strategy behind this. There is evidence of organisational commitment, the capabilities of these role holders, and appreciation by the students (and tutors) of these relatively new resources. This is also linked to Premier's Code self-review.</p> <p>Premier has modified/improved pre-entry interviewing and orientation, and students reported satisfaction with this. Tutors also noted improvements here as they flow on to programme readiness and teaching (see Recommendations).</p> <p>A 'customer journey workshop' process showed a thorough consideration of the student experience. Most aspects of the student experience and supporting processes have been considered. This could be improved by extension and linking to programme outcomes (i.e. the students' main goal).</p> <p>The Skills Organisation has a vocational literacy and numeracy and disability team. The impacts of their work were as yet unclear at Premier during this EER. For example, a high number of students in barbering identified as having a disability (11 of 42 in 2023), but records showed no focused analysis or organisational response to this. At the time of the EER visit, Premier had almost completed the requirement of the Dyslexia-Friendly Quality Mark. Premier anticipates that this training, support and resources for dyslexic learners and other learning impairments will benefit the tutors and learners (see also 2.2).</p> <p>Premier is improving its cultural responsiveness, and promotes and uses te reo Māori. Premier is also involved in Māori language week. Pacific language usage is also valued. Students hear from guest speakers about welfare issues such as racism, discrimination, bullying, violence, self-harm, drug and alcohol awareness. Premier can also refer students to a range of additional external supports.</p>

Conclusion:	Positive and measurable actions have arisen from Premier's Code self-review and gap analysis (and the wider strategic self-assessment by The Skills Organisation Incorporated). Student surveying, analysis and reporting is particularly robust. Premier has made genuine efforts to understand and meet the support and engagement needs of the students. The effectiveness of this and resulting support actions have yet to be soundly evidenced in improved retention, achievement and outcomes. Considering the variability in achievement, and comments from external interviewees, many of the students enrolled at level 4 were possibly not well suited to the programme or were simply not well supported and involved in their learning.
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1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>In essence, Premier is a completely different entity than it was at the last EER. It is now a blend of two PTEs under a larger ownership and more formal governance model. There is one new and one recently closed campus, but the core programme offer, funding and educational capability remain. Premier's self-assessment summary outlines this comprehensively and accurately. The self-assessment claim is accurate where it states that the 'PTE director has significantly lifted the strategic and business planning of the organisation'. Premier is already benefiting from the large and better resourced managerial and support services structure provided by The Skills Organisation.</p> <p>Premier has invested resources to ensure the stability and continuity of the programmes, in particular retaining teaching staff when enrolments have been declining in the tertiary education sector. There has also been notable investment at the Manukau campus, and some site rationalisation. The direction of travel at the PTE is positive from a site and resources point of view.</p> <p>Business and strategic self-assessment has been a key focus and need. Some limitations were noted in the depth and comprehensiveness of some legacy processes (graduate outcome information and programme review, to mention two examples). That said, many of these weaknesses or gaps had already been identified by the PTE, as sighted in their own</p>

	<p>records of the various formal committees and functional groups. One example of this is the academic committee, which will oversee all The Skills Organisation campuses and programmes. A revised terms of reference has been approved, and meetings have been held under these.</p> <p>Student achievement is clearly supported by continuously improved teaching resources and a welcoming campus environment with a professional tone and standards. Premier employs well-qualified and experienced staff. Staff are valued and supported to undertake relevant professional development.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Premier's governance and management is performing effectively. There is good evidence of revitalisation, new and purposeful initiatives, and improvement to the educational offering. The PTE's purpose and direction is increasingly clear and there is better ongoing communication with students and staff. In time, this should lead to more consistent patterns of achievement across the campuses for all student groups.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Compliance management has been a key focus since the purchase of Premier by The Skills Organisation Incorporated. Evidence of compliance management processes include: the yearly compliance planner for all campuses, with automated bring-ups, checklists and sign-offs; and records showing the extent of quality management system policy and procedure updates.⁶ A thorough Code self-review has been completed, and related staff training is being provided. Record-keeping around critical incidents involving students (four examples were sighted) was also robust.</p> <p>Premier provides notifications and attestations to NZQA as and when required. There is now more academic quality</p>

⁶ Six processes have been updated to date in 2023 (primarily assessment and moderation related, but also employment in the outcomes questionnaire); none were updated in 2022 (but others were in 2021 and preceding years). There are two different policy sections for part-time and full-time students: all were revised in 2022 or 2023.

	<p>management expertise and other human and financial resource management available to the PTE than previously.</p> <p>Late reporting of results to NZQA was noted. The 2019 results reporting was poor (71 per cent of student results). This improved markedly from 2020. The percentage of results reported late affected about 20-25 per cent of the students, and so does need further improvement.</p> <p>Although there had been some student file audits to establish conformity with internal policy, NZQA rules and Tertiary Education Commission funding rules, no audits have been done in respect of Premier as an organisation. The Skills Organisation Incorporated had recently appointed a specialist to that role.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Premier is prioritising compliance management. There is sound understanding of regulatory requirements. The evidence of effectiveness was apparent, but there is more to do. This is an area where NZQA can now have higher confidence based on a range of data, summary records and the evaluators' interviews.</p>

Focus areas

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

2.1 New Zealand Certificate in Commercial Barbering (Level 4)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Premier currently offers this programme – approved by NZQA in 2022 – at Takapuna, Lower Hutt and Dunedin. It builds on staff expertise in successfully delivering the New Zealand Certificate in Barbering Skills (Level 3). Thirty-one students enrolled in 2022, of whom 24 (77 per cent) completed their qualification.</p> <p>Premier’s analysis states: ‘We are seeing improved completion rates for Māori and Pasifika learners in the Barbering programmes [overall] moving from 75 per cent in 2020 for Pasifika to 100 per cent in 2022, however completion rates for Māori [range from] 69 per cent to 53 per cent. (2019-22)’. A key action relating to this is that all campuses are increasingly supported by the Te Ao Māori and Le Ala o Pasifika centrally co-ordinated teams.⁷</p> <p>In 2023, the new Manukau campus has been significantly refurbished. It reflects a high quality of design and resourcing appropriate for delivering quality education with an emphasis on practical application of skills (barbering, hairdressing and nail technology) in a simulated commercial environment. Programme delivery began at Manukau at the time of this EER.</p>
Conclusion:	Barbering programmes are well resourced, have industry-experienced teachers and are leading to employment for many.

⁷ ‘Nesian Waka was launched in 2023. It is a framework dedicated to supporting Māori and Pacific ākonga on their learning journey, embedding Tikanga and Pacific values to strengthen identity and mana...[the] Nesian Waka in Kura programme is currently being delivered across six Auckland High Schools.’ Premier Self-assessment Summary p.22

2.2 New Zealand Certificate in Beauty Therapy (Level 4)

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Educational performance of the beauty therapy focus area has been marginal. Approximately 18 students – almost a quarter of the intake – dropped out unqualified between 2019 and 2022. There were also unacceptable delays with issuing the promised and necessary student resource kits.⁸ The professional performance on the Takapuna campus was weak by some accounts, including that of an external stakeholder.</p> <p>One beauty therapy student approached the evaluators wishing to describe in detail the way Premier Newmarket staff had worked with her, her whānau and her high school guidance counsellor to support her learning using dyslexia-related learning tools and considerations, much to her satisfaction.</p> <p>Incidents of (inter-student) verbal abuse, and at least two instances of (inter-student) physical violence occurred at the Newmarket campus in the period of this EER. Credible, albeit brief descriptions emerged from the evaluators' interviews with the PTE. More information was sought and provided by Premier management. The documentation around these and the process followed seem appropriate. Regardless, these incidents are worrying at this level of programme. Premier would do well to closely analyse each applicant's readiness for the programme, to reduce the risk of future incidents.</p>
Conclusion:	The beauty therapy programmes were disrupted by, first, the Covid-19 pandemic, and then by the sale and purchase of the PTE and attendant uncertainty. Teaching staff were commended by the students and graduates interviewed. Overall, though, educational performance has been variable.

⁸ PTE management described 'supply chain' disruptions as a negative impact here.

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 Premier Institute of Education Limited:

- Undertake more comprehensive analysis of data and information gathered to draw meaningful conclusions and inform decision-making.
- Strengthen processes to ensure that all students are appropriately guided to a programme that matches their capabilities (i.e. conduct 'programme readiness' needs assessments).

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 1

Table 1. Recent external moderation of Premier assessments (source Premier)

SSB	Year	Total no. Of units moderated	Total no. Of samples moderated	Moderator agreed with assessors' decision % & no. of samples	Moderator disagreed with assessors' decision % & no. of samples
HITO	2021	3	9	100% (9)	
		1	3		100% (3)
		1	3	33% (1)	67% (2)
Toi Mai	2022	6	18	100% (18)	
Toitu te Waiora	2022	3	15	100% (15)	
NZQA	2022	1	3		100% (3)

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 fraud⁹*
- *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.*

⁹ 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 2021, 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 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 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 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, 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 2021. 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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