



External Evaluation and Review Report

New Zealand School of Dance

Date of report: 22 January 2026

About New Zealand School of Dance

New Zealand School of Dance (NZSD) is a registered charitable trust which prepares dancers in either classical or contemporary disciplines for careers in professional dance. Since 2014, NZSD has been the 'official' school of the Royal New Zealand Ballet (RNZB).

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	11 Hutchison Street, Newtown, Wellington
Eligible to enrol int. students:	Yes
Number of students (at the time of the EER):	Domestic: 72 full-time students, including five Māori and one Pasifika student. No students identified as having a disability. Twelve students are under 18 years of age. International: 12 full-time students. Three are under 18 years of age.
Number of staff:	11 full-time and 22 part-time staff
TEO profile:	See New Zealand School of Dance
Last EER outcome:	At the previous EER in 2021, NZQA was Highly Confident in the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of NZSD.
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All Programmes• International Student Support and Wellbeing
MoE number:	8503
NZQA reference:	C63204
Dates of EER visit:	3 and 4 November 2025

Summary of results

NZSD is successfully training and developing talented classical and contemporary dancers for the demanding and disciplined industry of professional dance. Comprehensive and ongoing identification and review of student and stakeholder needs and international trends informs and guides performance.

Highly Confident in educational performance

NZSD students have high rates of qualification achievement. Students are well supported, having their academic, physical and wellbeing needs met. Physical conditioning and a proactive approach to injury prevention and management has had a positive impact on students' dance performance and has reduced withdrawals.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

NZSD graduates pathway to further study, gain contracts or independently perform with professional dance companies. Professional dance companies are engaging NZSD's talented and technically skilled graduates who reflect New Zealand culture and identity.

Stringent selection processes and programme design and delivery reflect and expose students to the standards required for entry into the professional dance industry. Summative assessment is performance-based, reflecting the technical skills of the level of the qualification. Facilities, equipment and specialist resources are fit for purpose and effectively support the programme.

NZSD has strong governance, leadership and a clear direction provided by a well-informed and connected board of trustees and the management team. Robust engagement with key stakeholders alerts the PTE where change is required to assure NZSD's sustainability and relevance for New Zealand and internationally. Key accountabilities are consistently well managed by the business manager, who works with the director to assure compliance obligations are met, with good oversight by the board of trustees.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Qualification completion has been consistently very strong over 2022-24, with 70-80 per cent of level 6 students and 100 per cent of level 7 students achieving qualifications. Non-completions are almost exclusively due to injury, and there is no indication that priority student achievement differs from that of other students.</p> <p>The data is skewed by the 2021 achievement outcomes which were impacted by Covid. International students had little option but to leave New Zealand, and domestic students had restricted/no access to facilities, equipment and resources. Training at home or at other spaces was a significant deviation from being taught in the professional studio environment.</p> <p>Development of the student's technique, talent and discipline are important achievements required for progress, not just in study but in the industry. The provision of specifically designed facilities, industry-standard equipment, resources, specialist teachers and health-related staff (refer 1.4) are key factors that support achievement. Daily attention and monitoring by NZSD and students centres on the provision and progression of conditioning techniques to improve performance and limit or circumvent any susceptibility to injury. Attendance and academic progression are also carefully monitored.</p> <p>The validity of assessment is assured with the use of external guest tutors and panellists (international and domestic professional teachers and artistic directors) who judge the standard and level of the dancers' performance skills.</p>

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

Conclusion:	Dancers have high rates of qualification achievement. Close monitoring of conditioning techniques and technical development supports progress.
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1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Most graduates of the level 6 qualification pathway to the NZSD level 7 programme. Graduates of the level 7 qualification become employed in professional dance companies or establish their independent dance careers, taking up production work. Subsequently, some graduates, as the alumni survey indicates, move into health and dance-related professions such as physiotherapy.</p> <p>NZSD provides RNZB, the New Zealand Dance Company (NZDC) and other dance companies with formally trained, highly specialised dancers prepared to enter dance at the professional level. New Zealand and New Zealand-trained graduates reflect Aotearoa New Zealand culture and identity. This is an important attribute that New Zealand dance companies want to retain, particularly in classical dance in the current environment.²</p> <p>NZSD and other national dance companies are directly invested in the success of each other. There are longstanding and formal memoranda of understanding, alignment and engagement across RNZB and NZDC, and with NZSD at board, director and teaching levels. This provides NZSD with direct, authentic and effective opportunities to understand needs from a range of perspectives. NZSD's engagement with the International Alliance of Professional Dance Schools and participation at international events keeps the PTE abreast of international trends.</p> <p>Through these relationships, NZSD has been able to understand and anticipate challenges and opportunities. These insights enable NZSD to navigate, respond and meet</p>

² The availability, calibre and talent to draw from within New Zealand is limited and the economic environment makes professional dancing as a career option less attractive.

	the current and future needs of students, graduates, stakeholders and the PTE in areas that are within its influence and resources.
Conclusion:	NZSD graduates successfully pathway to further study, gain contracts or independently perform with professional dance companies. Professional dance companies are engaging NZSD's talented and technically skilled graduates who reflect New Zealand culture and identity.

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>NZSD offers associate and scholarship programmes to expose potential students to NZSD and professional dance companies. These opportunities allow students to consider the reality and appropriateness of this programme of study and career pathway option, before applying to study.</p> <p>NZSD has stringent entry processes, including auditions, to determine and assess the suitability and capability of a prospective student to successfully undertake the demands of physical study and discipline required for success.</p> <p>Programme design is planned to be sequential, with progression from foundational techniques through to choreographic development and performance-based final assessments. Teachers are very experienced in classical and/or contemporary dance, and high-calibre guest tutors³ frequently and regularly take classes. Students have opportunities for secondments with dance companies (for some level 6 and, more so, level 7 students). Dancing in professional productions augments authentic learning and genuine industry experience.</p> <p>NZSD maintains meaningful industry involvement. The advisory committee and professional bodies provide ongoing, relevant input that contributes to programme</p>

³ Guest tutors include RNZB and NZDC artistic directors and international dance teachers.

	<p>quality and reinforces alignment with professional sector expectations. These activities form the basis of an exceptional programme. The studio has facilities, equipment and resources to support programme delivery.</p> <p>There has been no external moderation called over the past four years. However, a monitoring report by NZQA identified that internal moderation of the level 6 programme was not robust. The large number of assessments (102) were not moderated on a sufficiently reliable basis. NZSD has responded effectively with a Type 2 change and, supported by the workforce development council, has developed a more fit-for-purpose assessment process.</p> <p>There are no concerns about the validity of assessment or assessor judgments. Internal moderation processes and staff capability have been strengthened. A planned review of the level 7 programme in 2026 reflects ongoing commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Stringent selection processes and programme design and delivery reflect and expose students to the standards required for entry into the professional dance industry. Summative assessment is performance-based, reflecting the technical skill required by the level of the qualification. Facilities, equipment and specialist resources are fit for purpose and effectively support the programme.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>NZSD knows its students well and understands the factors that contribute to injury in professional dancers – the key factor that affects non-completion. NZSD has a range of ways to monitor student development and respond promptly when there is susceptibility to an injury or when an injury is identified. Rehabilitation plans are designed and implemented using a range of professional services on site (physiotherapist, dietitian, counsellor, strength and Pilates instructors) and offsite. For example, NZSD has a physician running joint clinics to review treatment and rehabilitation plans. The monitoring, response and services in place to support the students are highly effective and reflect the professional dance environment.</p> <p>Support is a priority area, and activities and trends are reported to the board. Examples of student support include information on withdrawals, trends on the nature and number of injuries, access to counselling, and support with academic progress.</p> <p>Pastoral care is the responsibility of all staff, with one full-time position specifically dedicated to this role, which includes the wellbeing of international students. International students are supported effectively as per the Code of Practice.⁴ Homestay and Massey University accommodation is managed by external organisations, and NZSD has established relationships with the providers to ensure effective communication.</p> <p>Education talks (e.g. about concussion, initial injury management) and workshops (e.g. on eating disorders, mental health) occur throughout the year and when a need is identified. There are authentic opportunities for the student voice to be heard, including through a student representative group which is active and advocates for the student body.</p>

⁴ Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021

Conclusion:	Students are well supported, having their academic, physical and wellbeing needs met. Physical conditioning and a proactive approach to injury prevention and management has had a positive impact on students' dance performance and has reduced withdrawals.
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1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>NZSD is an incorporated charitable trust funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and governed by a board of trustees with significant governance experience and strong financial advisors. Board papers and meeting minutes are comprehensive and report on a wide range of activities within the PTE, including student and graduate outcomes.</p> <p>The governance structure, including subcommittees, works well with management, a relationship that supports robust discussion to strategically plan and drive the PTE forward.</p> <p>NZSD proactively scans and understands the range of external environmental factors impacting the PTE: TEC funding, Immigration New Zealand processes, political policies, international trends in classical and contemporary dance, changes in the tertiary education sector, and RNZB and NZDC imperatives. All underpin NZSD's strategic planning and initiatives aimed at meeting tertiary education curriculum standards, retaining a credible international reputation, and meeting the demands and needs of dance companies and students.</p> <p>There is a tension in trying to plan and meet needs across all stakeholder groups. However, NZSD does this well, recognising current and future areas for improvement while working to meet competing priorities within PTE parameters and resources.</p>
Conclusion:	Strong governance, leadership and clear direction is provided by a well-informed and connected board of trustees and management team. Robust engagement with key stakeholders alerts the PTE where change is required

	to assure NZSD's sustainability and ongoing relevance for New Zealand and internationally.
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1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Key compliance accountabilities are managed well by the business manager. The board of trustees is well informed through regular reporting from management. Effective systems are in place to monitor and comply with responsibilities associated with the PTE's operations, funding and programme delivery outcomes and assessment.</p> <p>Specific NZQA accountabilities met include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All NZQA yearly attestations – submitted in a timely manner. • The annual Code self-review, with attestation completed and the website updated, including confirmation of complaints and critical incidents. A detailed gap analysis indicated the extent to which these obligations are understood. • Permanent site approval notifications. • Programmes are delivered as approved. • Review of the quality management system. • Moderation processes strengthened. • Requirements for international student entry, visas, enrolment and insurance are met. • Organisational policies and procedures, including programme regulations, are well documented, discussed with staff, consistently implemented and regularly reviewed and ratified by the board. <p>NZSD has a contractual arrangement with a local university for the provision of student accommodation. Homestays are also available for students under 17 years to ensure younger students are provided with family support.</p>

	In addition to NZSD's child protection policy, staff employed since 2022 have been police-vetted. Additional measures within the policy ensure all guest teachers and students are not professionally compromised, which requires at least three people in a studio and no adult to be alone with a student.
Conclusion:	Key accountabilities are consistently well managed by the business manager who works with the director to ensure compliance obligations are met. There is good oversight and scrutiny by the board of trustees.

Focus areas

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

2.1 All Programmes

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

2.2 International Student Wellbeing and Support

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 fraud⁵*
- *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.*

⁵ 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/>.

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