



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design

Date of report: 8 December 2009

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MoE Number: 8509
NZQA Reference: C00013
Date of EER visit: 22 October 2009

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.

Brief description of TEO

Location: 24 Balfour Road, Parnell, Auckland

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design has approximately 440 full and part-time students

Sites: 24 Balfour Road and 130 St George's Bay Road, Parnell, Auckland

The original Whitecliffe Art School was established in 1983. The college moved to the current location in Parnell in 2008. An additional site in St George's Bay Road houses studio space for students and the Pearce Gallery, which hosts a number of exhibitions of work by students and faculty.

Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design (Whitecliffe) offers a wide range of programmes from Foundation (Level 4) to Postgraduate (Level 9). The foundation programmes include two level 4 Certificates in Arts and Design. One of these is a one-year programme structured to provide support for learners who need English language assistance. The Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) is a four-year degree which has a number of exit qualifications. These exit qualifications include two level 5 Certificates of Arts and Design, one of which is structured to provide English language assistance, a level 6 Diploma of Arts and Design, and a level 7 Diploma of Arts and Design (Advanced). From year two students in the Bachelor of Fine Arts specialise in fine arts, graphic design, photography, or fashion design. The postgraduate programmes include a Master of Fine Arts (MFA), a Master of Arts in Arts Therapy (MAAT), a Master of Arts in Arts Therapy Clinical (MAAT-Clinical), and the newly renamed Master of Arts in Arts Management (MAAM). Sixty-seven per cent of Whitecliffe's students are aged 20 years and over and 10 per cent are international students.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design. Key reasons for this are:

- Course completion rates and qualification achievement rates are high and benchmarked nationally and internationally. For example, national data show that five-year completion rates for all Bachelor degrees are at about 40 per cent, compared with a rate of 79.2 per cent for Whitecliffe.¹
- Whitecliffe contributes positively to the art and design community of New Zealand, and internationally. The organisation boasts a high employment rate for graduates and Whitecliffe's alumni can be found exhibiting and contributing to the creative arts across and beyond New Zealand.
- Teaching staff maintain currency by working as practising artists, therapists, arts managers, or researchers. New staff are inducted and attached to a team to support their understanding of the curriculum and its delivery. Student feedback is used to inform performance reviews and to help plan professional development for teaching staff. Students spoken to were very positive about the teaching staff, and student satisfaction surveys concurred.
- One-to-one support is a key feature of the students' experience at Whitecliffe. All staff take a guidance and support role and this, alongside other formal systems of support, enables potential problems to be identified early. Retention rates are consistently high.
- The governance and management team support all staff to aim for excellence in the delivery of high quality arts and design programmes. The staff spoken to all felt they had the opportunity to contribute ideas to improve the organisation.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **highly confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Whitecliffe. The reasons are:

- The organisation has in place a number of processes and practices which support learner achievement. Both formal and informal processes are used to understand the needs of learners and their potential barriers to learning.

¹ Tertiary Education Commission (2009) Monitoring Information: Completion Retention and Progression. Page from Tertiary Wiki retrieved 29.10.2009 from <http://wiki.tertiary.govt.nz/~TESMon/MonitoringInformation/CompletionRetentionAndProgression> Tertiary Education Commission. (August 2009). Progress Monitoring Report for: Whitecliffe Enterprises Limited.

- Whitecliffe has established a number of important associations with similar organisations and the relevant standard-setting bodies. These associations enable Whitecliffe to measure its performance and make meaningful comparisons.
- External and internal communication mechanisms are maintained to ensure up-to-date stakeholder feedback is available. The external evaluation and review team heard of numerous examples of this feedback informing curriculum redesign or technological upgrades.
- An openness and transparency was observed on the visit and was evident throughout the documentation provided. It is clear that this organisation understands its learners, alumni, and the wider arts and design community.

Basis for External Evaluation and Review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

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).

Findings

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

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of Whitecliffe included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support, including international students.

The following focus areas were also chosen:

- The Bachelor of Fine Arts Year One (Certificate of Arts and Design and Certificate of Arts and Design (Preparatory) (Level 5))
- Postgraduate programmes.

Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

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 **Excellent**.

Context

Whitecliffe interviews all students who want to enrol into the Bachelor of Fine Arts. For students underprepared for the degree there is the option of the level 4 foundation programme. The first year of the Bachelor offers students the opportunity to gain a breadth of understanding of arts and design including cultural studies, theory, academic study skills,

and core skills. Students can also select the preparatory programme which provides specialist English language and academic writing support. There are strict attendance requirements for the students in the Bachelor programme and non-attendance is followed up by student support staff. The exit qualifications offer students who choose not to continue with their study the opportunity to leave with a lower level qualification.

All heads of department teach on the first-year programme to give students the opportunity to meet key faculty staff and for the faculty staff to ensure that students are being appropriately prepared for one of the specialist focus areas: fine arts, fashion design, graphic design, photography.

The Masters programmes are offered in a low-residency format² which enables students to study while they continue to work. Supervision is closely monitored by the postgraduate programme manager. All postgraduate students participate in a one-to-one interview during their on-campus experiences, which provides an opportunity to discuss potential barriers to success.

Explanation

Whitecliffe has high retention and achievement rates. For example, in 2008, in the first year of the BFA, 77 per cent of the students were retained through the year. Of those students retained, 97 per cent successfully completed their courses and 94 per cent progressed to the second year. Data provided by the organisation show that these rates have steadily improved over the past six years. The Masters programmes also have high retention and completion rates. Whitecliffe regularly invites external feedback from national and international organisations that offer similar programmes. For example, the BFA and MFA programmes are benchmarked against other organisations that form part of the US accrediting agency, the National Association of Schools of Arts and Design (NASAD). National data show that five-year completion rates for all Bachelor degrees are at about 40 per cent, compared with a rate of 79.2 per cent for Whitecliffe³. Mean course completion rates for the sub-sector in 2008 were 77.2 per cent, compared with Whitecliffe's course completion rate of 87.9 per cent.

Students reported increasing levels of confidence and developing critical awareness. They also reported "finding their voice". This feedback was supported by students who responded to Whitecliffe's online student satisfaction surveys and graduate surveys. For example, of the respondents to the postgraduate student satisfaction survey, 13 of the 14 respondents reported that their experience at Whitecliffe contributed to their thinking critically and analytically.

² The low residency format is a term used to describe distance learning. Students in the postgraduate programmes study at a distance but attend block seminars on campus several times a year.

³ Tertiary Education Commission (2009) Monitoring Information: Completion Retention and Progression. Page from Tertiary Wiki retrieved 29.10.2009 from <http://wiki.tertiary.govt.nz/~TESMon/MonitoringInformation/CompletionRetentionAndProgression> Tertiary Education Commission. (August 2009). Progress Monitoring Report for: Whitecliffe Enterprises Limited.

Whitecliffe also seeks feedback on the achievements of its alumni through its Facebook networking site. The list of achievements by current and past alumni includes exhibitions, job promotions, conference presentations, and international awards. Perhaps most visibly, the achievements of Whitecliffe students, graduates, and faculty are regularly displayed on the walls of the campus and in the Pearce Gallery on St George's Bay Road.

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 **Excellent**.

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

Context

Whitecliffe has articulated its unique position with respect to identifying key stakeholders in the arts and design field. They argue that, "from the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage to the ordinary New Zealander buying an artwork at a Saturday Market...every New Zealander is a stakeholder in the arts". Whitecliffe is networked into the arts and design community through students and faculty. A number of faculty staff are alumni from Whitecliffe.

Whitecliffe engages with its learners through regular course evaluations, online student satisfaction surveys, and exit interviews and regularly invites external stakeholders to provide feedback into annual programme reviews.

Explanation

Graduate surveys show high levels of employment for graduates from the college. In 2008 89 per cent were either employed or self-employed and 7 per cent were looking to do further study. This compares with the previous year when 94 per cent were reported as either employed or undertaking further study. The employment rates for graduates from the Masters programmes are reported to be 100 per cent for previous years, although the current recession has affected this outcome more recently.

For the arts therapy community Whitecliffe is the only provider of the qualifications necessary to practise as an arts therapist. The addition of the clinical year to the MAAT enables graduates to meet the requirements for registration as practitioners. Whitecliffe is a key player in the arts therapy community in New Zealand, with senior faculty members and a graduate holding key positions in the Australia New Zealand Arts Therapy Association (ANZATA). Arts therapy is still gaining recognition in New Zealand and Whitecliffe has been instrumental in raising awareness of the therapy and the professionalism of its practitioners.

The outcomes for the vast majority of the students who enrol in the Year One certificate in the BFA programme were extremely positive. For example, for those who enrolled in 2008, 94 per cent progressed on to Year Two. Students reported that the Year One programme gave them the opportunity to develop their skills across a range of media and to define for themselves the specialist areas in which they want to major. International students who chose the English-supported option reported gains in their English speaking and writing

skills. All students reported that their ability to think critically and give and receive feedback had been enhanced. Feedback from the students who completed the postgraduate programmes reported such outcomes as developing their critical thinking skills: “I found my writing voice”; and it, “totally changed my output in art...I came along in leaps and bounds as a practising artist”.

Students who graduate out of the BFA take with them a contextual portfolio documented by photo and text, having experienced a number of times the reality of working to a brief and having to meet exhibition deadlines. The portfolios are evidence of the students’ abilities to be able to reflect critically and articulate verbally and in writing the ideas that sit behind their creative work.

Whitecliffe has become a key player in the arts and design community of Auckland. Art exhibitions regularly feature students, alumni, or faculty from Whitecliffe, and these are promoted through Whitecliffe’s in-house newsletter, *Create*. Whitecliffe has good mechanisms for linking with alumni and keeps up to date with many who are being employed locally and internationally in the arts and design industry.

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 **Excellent**.

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

Context

Whitecliffe has in place methods for reviewing the needs of learners on entry and during their course of study. There are a number of processes used to engage with the wider arts and design community, and external advisers are regularly invited to give input into programme design and delivery.

Explanation

Whitecliffe’s enrolment process for students entering into the Bachelor of Fine Arts includes a tour of the campus and a one-to-one interview. Students’ portfolios are discussed at the one-to-one meeting and students are expected to write an essay outlining their reasons for studying at Whitecliffe. All students are invited to bring family along to the initial meetings and family are welcome to attend other key meetings with the students throughout their period of study with Whitecliffe.

The initial interview and pre-entry criteria ensure students are enrolled into the programme that is best suited to their abilities. For those who need extra academic writing or English language support, there are options in the foundation certificate, the Year One programme and in years two and three. Whitecliffe has a formal relationship with FERN School of English to support students with English for Academic purposes.

Currently, there are low numbers of Māori and Pasifika students. A staff member has responsibility for mentoring Māori and Pasifika students, and regular meetings are held with students to discuss their progress and learning needs. A Māori advisor is also

available to support faculty and management and a number of part-time Māori and Pasifika lecturers. In addition, a range of Māori speakers are brought in as guest speakers, some of whom are alumni.

Students are given regular opportunities to give feedback on their courses at the end of each course, at mid-year reviews, and at the end of the year. Student feedback to the Year One programme was described as “lively and explicit”, with this feedback forming part of the end-of-year programme review. The evaluators heard of a number of instances where learner feedback was listened to and changes were implemented in response. Changes implemented to the curriculum are then a focus of further evaluation to assess effectiveness.

Every year heads of department and programme leaders write an annual programme report. This is in part to meet the formal requirements for registration, although these reports are also used to reflect on and review the year and to focus attention on where improvements or enhancements should be focused. The annual programme reports are informative and reflect an open and transparent process.

To further ensure that the programmes meet the needs of learners and stakeholders, Whitecliffe regularly invites external advisors to review its curriculum and programme. There are a number of examples of the organisation responding to external feedback, including the change of name to the Master of Arts in Arts Management, updating the graphic design computer suite and software, and realigning the first-year curriculum to better meet the needs of secondary school leavers. At the time of the external evaluation and review the head of the fashion department, in response to industry feedback, was researching the possibilities for the implementation of computer-aided design for pattern making.

The MAAT and MAAT-Clinical programmes are informed by key faculty being members of the Australia and New Zealand Arts Therapy Association (ANZATA), the professional registration body. Whitecliffe also has close relationships with similar sized arts and design colleges in the United States, for example the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. It is through networking with these organisations and the National Association of Schools of Arts and Design (NASAD) that Whitecliffe ensures the currency of its activities and programmes.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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 **Excellent**.

Context

Whitecliffe takes a team-based approach to teaching, enabling more experienced tutors to mentor new tutors. There are regular opportunities for students to give feedback on the quality of the teaching through course evaluations. These course evaluations feed into the formal system of performance management and professional development to support and mentor staff in their roles. Much of the teaching is studio based and Whitecliffe has a policy to keep the student/tutor ratio to a maximum of 1:19. There is low staff turnover at

Whitecliffe. Most lecturers are practitioners themselves, involved in fine arts, photography, design, therapy, arts management, or research.

Explanation

A number of the senior faculty members hold qualifications in art and design as well as teaching qualifications and senior staff members mentor new and part-time staff. Many of the new faculty staff are alumni from Whitecliffe and new lecturers are chosen to add diversity to the skills available to support students. Staff reported that being part of a collegial team and receiving mentoring supported their development as lecturers.

Teaching staff and management explained how course evaluation forms provide useful information about the teaching and learning and that this information is fed into professional development plans and performance reviews. BFA students reported that they regularly engaged with their lecturers, who were very helpful and supportive and genuinely wanted them to do well. The smaller class sizes and one-to-one support was valued by the students. Student feedback was also very positive about the fact that they were being taught by “practising artists” who encouraged them in their own work and invited them along to exhibitions. The feeling of being in a creative space with “cutting edge” artwork always on display gave a sense of vibrancy to the organisation.

The annual reports and interviews with lecturers confirmed a robust moderation process which ensures that students are assessed fairly. As part of the external moderation process external assessors review the various component parts of the programmes. These external assessors include invited visitors from New Zealand and overseas. For example, John Gordon, Provost at the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, assessed the MFA winter seminar (on-campus component), informed by the national standards set by NASAD as well as Whitecliffe’s own internal guidelines.

There is a policy of giving written feedback for every summative assessment piece. For formative assessment, verbal feedback is often given and students reported finding this a bit intimidating initially and hard to retain. Students are encouraged to bring family or friends to the feedback sessions and there was one instance reported when this session was scheduled for the weekend to enable the student to bring whānau support.

The supervision of postgraduate students is closely monitored formally and informally and all correspondence between supervisors and students is copied to the postgraduate programme manager to ensure students are receiving regular appropriate supervision. The use of Blackboard as an online learning tool early in the Masters programmes was appreciated by some students as an engagement tool. Students generally felt that their supervision had been excellent, with feedback being almost immediate. Whitecliffe participated in an Ako Aotearoa-funded research project which focused on research supervision, and the researcher noted the support mechanisms in place for supervisors, comprehensive course handbooks, and useful orientation processes that ensure expectations are clear for both supervisors and students⁴.

⁴ Rath, Jean (2008) Developing research supervision skills: understanding and enhancing supervisor professional development practice in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Ako Aotearoa Regional Hub Projects Funded Scheme: Final Report.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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 **Excellent**.

Context

Whitecliffe has a number of mechanisms to ensure that students are guided and supported through their course of study. These include student handbooks and enrolment information and advice, dedicated student support staff, a free counselling service, and the Parkyn Library. Whitecliffe is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

Explanation

Students interviewed felt that Whitecliffe had effective methods for supporting and guiding them through their study. They named a number of people to whom they felt they could go to if they needed support or guidance. International students commented on the high level of support and all believed that Whitecliffe had met their expectations.

Whitecliffe has dedicated support staff who are available to talk with students if they have any concerns or problems that may be affecting their study. However, these staff are aware of their professional boundaries and a formal arrangement with Youthline means every student can access up to three free counselling sessions if necessary.

There are strict attendance requirements, particularly for students at the foundation level and in the Year One programme. The monitoring of attendance allows student support staff to react quickly if students seem to be getting off track. This level of close supervision decreases over the years of the student's course of study as the students are given increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.

There is a formal complaints process which students are aware of. Most issues tend to be dealt with immediately as they arise. However, there have been times when students have submitted written complaints to management. Small-group instructional diagnosis is used to investigate problems that arise, and that the evaluation team heard from students and staff examples of issues being resolved through this process.

The Parkyn Library has a growing collection and is an important resource for students studying at Whitecliffe. The library has access to a number of important databases and can interloan materials from other important collections. The catalogue is online and students can request items from home via the internet. However, it was apparent that some of the policies in place in the library have not been very student centred, making it difficult for students to access resources. The senior management team are aware of the issues and are working to resolve them.

For the postgraduate students, one-to-one interviews are held during the on campus seminars with either the dean or the associate dean of research and postgraduate studies to determine how the student is progressing. These interviews give both the senior managers

and the students an opportunity to identify any problems the students are having and ensure that the requirements and support available for successful completion are clearly understood.

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

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 **Excellent**.

Context

The president of Whitecliffe has a number of mentors to support her with financial and legal aspects of running the organisation. For strategic and operational matters the executive management group has responsibility for the high-level management of the organisation. The organisation has a strong focus on excellence and aims to protect its reputation as a leading arts and design institution.

Explanation

The senior management team has good mechanisms for understanding how the organisation is performing. Most of the executive management team are teaching on different programmes and so are actively involved with both faculty staff and students in learning and teaching.

Course evaluations and programme reviews are designed to evaluate the success of programmes, or components of them, and make adjustments to improve learner outcomes. Regular programme reviews are conducted alongside more targeted reviews, which the organisation has found more useful in getting to the core of important aspects of programmes. Examples of targeted reviews include a review of the business and finance courses, a review of the research methods paper, and a general review of the foundation programmes.

To support its understanding the organisation regularly benchmarks itself against international organisations. To do this the college has formed an association with NASAD in the US and relationships with similar arts and design colleges in the US and Europe. Regular invitations are issued to individuals with relevant external expertise to be part of review and moderation processes.

Staff reported the organisation as having a very flat structure, with the management team being open and approachable. Furthermore, examples were provided of good ideas being valued and explored. The organisation has a very stable staff and was frequently likened to a family. Staff are supported to continue with their own art and design endeavours by being allocated a day a week to their own work. Extended leave periods and sabbaticals are also used to support and encourage staff to keep their own practice current.

Part 2: Performance in focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: The Bachelor of Fine Arts Year One

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

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

Context

The Year One of the Bachelor of Fine Arts is the first year of a four-year degree. The Year One programme enables students to learn a broad range of knowledge across the arts and design field, including cultural studies, academic study skills, drawing skills, and visual theory. It is through the studio-based elective courses that students experience the specialist knowledge areas of fine arts, fashion design, graphic design, and photography.

Explanation

The entry criteria and enrolment processes ensure that students know what is expected of them, and any potential barriers to learning can be identified. Therefore, any particular needs that the student has are identified early and appropriately managed. There is a strong emphasis on attendance which students are aware of and which ensures participation in the different courses.

For students for whom English is their second language, or for those who need extra support with academic writing, there is an alternative course of study which includes English and academic studies. International students explained that the support they received for their English was very helpful, particularly with respect to supporting them with the assessments for other courses where academic writing was expected. First-year students reported getting a lot of support for their first written assessments, stating that the staff had “‘baby-stepped’ us through the first one”.

Students are taught by working artists and are encouraged to take risks and offer their own work for critique. The students felt that the value of the first year for them had been in learning to push themselves and learning how to give and receive feedback.

By experiencing all the specialist areas the students are well equipped to choose their majors, which will be their focus for the next three years. Some students reassessed their first choice due to the experience of the first year. The first-year programme also gives a chance for key faculty staff to meet students and assess their strengths and weaknesses.

For students who complete the year but decide not to continue there is an exit qualification, either the Certificate of Arts and Design or the Certificate of Arts and Design (Preparatory) (Level 5), but few students choose this path. Student support staff could identify the reasons why the students who had not completed had withdrawn and for most the reasons were personal. Most students who enrol into the first year complete successfully and nearly all of those who complete successfully transition into the BFA Year Two.

2.2 Focus area: Postgraduate programmes

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

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

Context

The postgraduate programmes offered at Whitecliffe are Master of Fine Arts, Master of Arts in Arts Management, Master of Arts in Arts Therapy, and Master of Arts in Arts Therapy (Clinical). All Masters programmes are offered in a low-residency format with students expected to attend on campus seminar programmes.

Explanation

The postgraduate programmes have a high rate of completion and success and these achievements are benchmarked internationally, with particular reference to similar programmes in the US. Student satisfaction surveys for postgraduate students reveal a high level of satisfaction with the programme and the organisation. Students met during the evaluation confirmed this level of satisfaction.

Employment outcomes from the Masters programmes are positive, with many students using the postgraduate degree for promotional purposes or an increase in remuneration. A list of graduates from the MAAM programme was provided which identified that their employment was in arts-related organisations in New Zealand and internationally.

From conversations with students and senior staff it became clear that there were times when student feedback resulted in a timely response by the Whitecliffe faculty staff. One example included the feedback from students on the research methods paper. The paper was restructured, taking a more practical, “hands-on” focus and then re-evaluated to ascertain the effectiveness of the changes.

The Master of Arts in Arts Therapy Clinical has become the minimum qualification set by the standard-setting body ANZATA for practising therapists. Whitecliffe offers the only option for those who wish to follow this course of study in New Zealand. Therefore, it is significant in raising the profile and status of arts therapy.

The growing body of dissertations are evidence of the wider contribution Whitecliffe and its graduates are making to the research community of art and design. These dissertations are described as “a labour of toil” for the arts and design students and as such they are testimony to the hard work of the students and the careful supervision of the teaching team. Whitecliffe has a research and ethics committee which supports the work of staff and students.

Mandatory focus area: Student support, including international students

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

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

Context

Whitecliffe is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students and about 10 per cent of students come from overseas. Staff and students at Whitecliffe emphasised that the size of the organisation allowed a warm familiar atmosphere and a personalised approach to student support.

Explanation

All staff, including the administration team, have a role in student guidance and support. All the international students spoken to were satisfied with the level of support they received, and they named a number of people who they felt they could approach if they had a problem. All international students felt the information they had gathered about the organisation, from the website, their agents, and course information had been accurate and a good reflection of what they had experienced. There is a dedicated pastoral support role and that person's office is located in the hub of student activity, which encourages access.

Whitecliffe is embracing texting and email as a means for ensuring it keeps in contact with students. Particularly pleasing is the success of the new Facebook site. Although only recently launched, the site is quickly gaining momentum, with a large number of current students, alumni, and other interested people signing up as friends and sharing information about their activities.

Special mention was also made of the networking efforts of the Korean students, supported by Whitecliffe, who host exhibitions and regular gatherings with other Korean students studying at all levels both at Whitecliffe and at other creative arts programmes in Auckland.

Mandatory focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The overall rating for performance in governance, management, and strategy is **Excellent**.

The overall rating for capability in self-assessment in governance, management, and strategy is **Excellent**.

Context

The president has a governance role over the organisation she founded with her husband 26 years ago. She is supported in this role by a number of carefully chosen mentors, both local and international. The day-to-day running of the organisation is the responsibility of the executive management group, most of whom teach on various programmes from the Year One programme to Masters level.

Explanation

The self-assessment document provided by Whitecliffe mentions the success of "our culture of informal decision making". The evaluation team observed an openness and transparency among all staff and a willingness to share information. Staff talked about the flat structure,

the open-door policy of the management team, and a willingness of the organisation to listen to good ideas. It is clear that robust formal processes are used to inform policy and process, but not at the expense of staff being able to respond quickly to issues as they arise.

An important feature of Whitecliffe is its willingness to look outside itself to inform processes and programmes. Many external guests are invited to the organisation as guest lecturers, studio supervisors, external assessors, and programme reviewers. Furthermore, the organisation has formed associations with standard-setting bodies such as ANZATA and NASAD to provide benchmarking data to measure performance.

Whitecliffe has also established formal associations with Christchurch Design and Arts College of New Zealand and Wairiki Institute of Technology. Whitecliffe is running its Year Four programme in Christchurch and Rotorua to enable diploma students from the partner organisations to complete a Bachelor of Fine Arts.

Evidence was also provided of faculty participating in conferences and exhibitions, enabling them to liaise and network with other stakeholders outside the organisation. Contact with high schools has also increased, with a large number of students coming through for “student for a day” experiences. The closer contact with schools has resulted in a realigning of the Year One programme to better fit with secondary school leavers.

Faculty staff also made mention of succession planning, which enables staff to be absent without detriment to the running of the organisation or programmes. The success of this planning became clear with the recent resignation of a member of the senior management group. Other staff were able to take up parts of the role with ease and no systems were compromised.

Statements of Confidence

The statements of confidence are derived from the findings within and across the focus areas. A four-step scale is used: highly confident, confident, not yet confident, not confident.

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design. Key reasons for this are:

- Course completion rates and qualification achievement rates are high and results are benchmarked locally and internationally.
- Whitecliffe contributes positively to the art and design community of New Zealand, and internationally. The organisation boasts a high employment rate for graduates and Whitecliffe's alumni can be found exhibiting and contributing to the creative arts across and beyond New Zealand.
- Teaching staff maintain currency by working as practising artists, therapists, arts managers, or researchers. New staff are inducted and attached to a team to support their understanding of the curriculum and delivery. Students spoken to were very positive about the teaching staff, and student satisfaction surveys concurred.
- One-to-one support is a key feature of the students' experience at Whitecliffe. All staff take a guidance and support role and this, alongside other formal systems of support, means that potential problems are caught early. Retention rates are consistently high.
- The governance and management team support all staff to aim for excellence in the delivery of high quality arts and design programmes. The staff spoken to all felt they had the opportunity to contribute ideas to improve the organisation.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **highly confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Whitecliffe College of Art and Design. The reasons are:

- The organisation has in place a number of processes and practices which support learner achievement. Both formal and informal processes are used to understand the needs of learners and their potential barriers to learning.
- Whitecliffe has established a number of important associations with similar organisations and relevant standard-setting bodies. These associations enable Whitecliffe to measure its performance and make meaningful comparisons.
- External and internal communication mechanisms are maintained to ensure that up-to-date stakeholder feedback is available. The evaluation team heard of numerous examples of this feedback informing curriculum redesign or technological upgrades.

- There was an openness and transparency observed on the visit and evident throughout the documentation provided. It is clear that this organisation understands its learners, alumni, and the wider arts and design community.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's regular scheduling policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from this EER.

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