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External Evaluation and Review Report

Whitecliffe Enterprises Limited
(trading as Whitecliffe College)

Date of report: 11 February 2022

About Whitecliffe Enterprises Limited

Whitecliffe is a large private training establishment offering programmes from levels 3-9. Seven of its 18 programmes are at degree-level or above. From 2018, Whitecliffe has undertaken significant changes with the acquisition of two other PTEs, the merger of three operational systems, new key staff, and a new governance, management and academic leadership structure.

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| Type of organisation: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| Location ¹ : | 57 Symonds Street, Grafton, Auckland |
| Code of Practice signatory: | Yes |
| Number of students (as at Sept 2021): | Domestic: 930 (Māori – 113; Pasifika – 66; under-25 – 457); International: 92 |
| Number of staff: | 107 (82 full-time, 22 part-time, three fixed term) ² |
| TEO profile: | See Whitecliffe College on the NZQA website |
| Last EER outcome: | In December 2017, NZQA was Highly Confident in Whitecliffe's educational performance, and Confident in its capability in self-assessment. |
| Scope of evaluation: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fashion programmes: New Zealand Certificate in Apparel and Fashion Technology (Pattern Making) (Level 4) Programme ID: 124120; New Zealand Diploma in Apparel and Fashion Technology (Level 5) Programme ID: 124122• IT programmes: New Zealand Certificate in Information Technology Essentials (Level 4) Programme ID: 125175; New Zealand Diploma in Networking (Level 6) Programme ID: 124092; Bachelor of Applied Information Technology (Level 7) Programme ID: 125453• Master of Fine Arts (Level 9) Programme ID: 102506 |

¹ Whitecliffe has permanent delivery sites in Christchurch, Wellington and Manukau in addition to the main campus in Grafton.

² In addition to the 107 employees, Whitecliffe also has approximately 30 independent contractors (clinical supervisors, learning designers, staff support on delivery and research supervision).

- International Student Support and Wellbeing

MoE number: 8509

NZQA reference: C45348

Dates of EER visit³: 26-29 October 2021

³ Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, this EER was conducted online.

Summary of Results

Whitecliffe has successfully ushered in significant development and improvement in the face of changes and challenges over the last four years. Strong evidence shows a responsive and innovative organisation focused on supporting learners and continuous improvement.

Highly Confident in educational performance

Achievement rates for both domestic and international students are high and there is evidence of parity for priority learners. Through its programmes, Whitecliffe provides high value to the learners and the industry, as attested by the stakeholders interviewed for this EER. The applied, practical nature of the programmes gives students useful, practical and transferrable skills which are attractive to employers. Engagement with industry stakeholders is a strong feature of this PTE.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Whitecliffe's strong governance and management team is fulfilling well its clear vision and strategic direction. It has produced graduates with relevant capabilities and creative, critical thinkers who are meeting the important needs of industry. Academic leadership is strong, and teaching staff are well-qualified and experienced.

Whitecliffe gives high importance to student support, both academic and pastoral. Domestic and international students all receive the same holistic support. Staff members are fully aware of the Codes of Practice⁴ and take seriously their responsibilities as pastoral care providers. Staff are well-supported by management and are given opportunities for professional development.

The integration of three PTEs has improved Whitecliffe's systems and self-assessment practices significantly. Despite the challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, Whitecliffe has done very well in the last four years, and remains true to its mission to create meaningful change for its students and the community.

⁴ The Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016, and the Education (Pastoral Care of Domestic Tertiary Students) Interim Code of Practice 2019

Key evaluation question findings⁵

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Good |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Whitecliffe has had strong completion rates over the last four years. Despite some variation across programmes, there is a strong pattern of course and qualification completions which are mostly above the sector performance.⁶ Māori and Pasifika completion is likewise high, and in the main shows parity of achievement among students. International student completion is strong, especially in 2019 (100 per cent qualification and course completions). Completion in 2020 was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, but for the 2021 year to date, qualification completion forecasting is showing an improved result.</p> <p>Across programmes, students gain useful, practical and transferrable skills, which include creativity and critical thinking, teamwork and collaboration, adaptability, assertiveness and confidence, as well as general employment skills.</p> <p>Whitecliffe has an effective system in place to monitor achievement, which is tracked in various ways (i.e. by campus, by programme, by demographics, by funding). Where there are variations in the annual achievement rate within programmes, this is thoroughly investigated and reviewed.</p> <p>Combining three data monitoring systems into one did not affect the data capture occurring over the merger. There is still some variation in the quality of data monitoring and analysis per programme, which Whitecliffe acknowledges needs to be made consistent. There are some areas in the monitoring and analysis of completion data that need to be more structured and considered at the organisation level. For example, completion data for international students is monitored at programme level; there is no ready information at the organisation level. Whitecliffe has plans for continued data monitoring improvement in 2022 to address the need for</p> |

⁵ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

⁶ See Appendix 1.

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| | greater consistency of information across all programmes, schools, and campuses. |
| Conclusion: | Whitecliffe is performing well, with key educational performance indicators tracking mostly above sector medians, and there is generally parity for priority groups. Data monitoring and analysis – centralised since the merger – has significantly improved. |

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

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Good |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Whitecliffe graduates gain practical skills and knowledge in their field of study. Employers highly value the very strong foundational capabilities that Whitecliffe graduates bring with them. These include practical skills and knowledge in their field of study, as well as work-readiness, a can-do attitude and a high standard of work ethic. Industry stakeholders expressed high regard for Whitecliffe graduates, and actively hire them.</p> <p>For the Bachelor of Applied IT degree graduates, a high number have relevant employment, often where they have had their internship. Fashion graduates also have strong positive results for graduate destinations, while fine arts graduates are applying their creativity and transferrable skills to producing art, and in other workplace contexts.</p> <p>Graduate data monitoring is carried out for each programme, with some more detailed and more cohesive than others. At the organisational level, however, this data is less evident. There is no overarching reporting on graduate destinations that analyses, for example, outcomes for international, Māori and Pasifika students. However, staff know these outcomes anecdotally. Because it is an NZQA requirement to report on priority learner achievement⁷, Whitecliffe needs to adopt a more refined approach to monitoring and reporting graduate destination data. It is noted that a Careers and Employment Support unit has</p> |

⁷ <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/how-nzqa-evaluates-educational-performance-in-external-evaluation-and-review/>

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| | been recently established, which aims to help improve graduate destination monitoring and reporting. |
| Conclusion: | There is convincing evidence that Whitecliffe provides high value outcomes to its graduates, the industry and the community. Data monitoring and analysis could be enhanced to ensure that more comprehensive, analysed data on valued outcomes is available. |

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Whitecliffe is well-connected with industry and regularly engages with them. The advisory boards, tutors' industry networks, internship hosts and external guest speakers provide strong industry representation that ensures programmes are relevant and current. Whitecliffe is responsive to feedback, as evidenced in the PTE's range of programmes in response to industry needs, and the regular review and updating of the programmes. Feedback from students and tutors likewise contributes to programme review and development.</p> <p>Since the merger, Whitecliffe has worked effectively to improve its programme offering and delivery. Since the last EERs of the three PTEs, Whitecliffe has developed a broader suite of programmes across industries, including at degree and postgraduate levels. Quality of delivery is given primary importance by Whitecliffe, and to this end a teaching and learning strategy is in place, providing the PTE with a framework for assuring quality.</p> <p>The applied nature of Whitecliffe's programmes matches student and industry needs. Work placements are well-managed, ensuring students gain the intended learning outcomes, practical skills and work experience. There are robust mechanisms and processes in place to ensure consistent practice and uphold academic standards. Tutors follow the same lesson plans, use the same resources, and have intercampus collaboration, ensuring consistency of delivery. All assessments are pre-moderated, and both internal and external moderation results are positive.</p> |

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| | Whitecliffe has established a culture of continuous self-assessment and programme review. These are evidenced at all levels of the organisation, from the weekly staff meetings to monthly management-level meetings and quarterly programme reviews, all informing the annual programme reviews. |
| Conclusion: | Whitecliffe's extensive engagement with industry, and comprehensive review system, ensures the design and delivery of its broad range of programmes match well the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders. |

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

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Whitecliffe has a dedicated pastoral care team to ensure students have access to relevant support. Accurate programme information is provided to prospective students to manage their expectations and ensure the programme is the right fit for their goals. A comprehensive orientation is provided at the start of the programme.</p> <p>The student support is holistic, and in recent times has been more focused on students' mental and emotional health. An online mental health wellbeing platform⁸ is available for the students, which provides initial assistance, helps to build self-awareness and resilience, and removes barriers to students seeking help. Students can access professional support and/or counselling through the platform.</p> <p>The teaching staff are the primary pastoral care providers for the students, and they coordinate closely with the pastoral care team to ensure sufficient follow-up support is given. Student voice is important to the organisation. There are a number of ways students can give feedback or suggestions to the PTE (e.g. student surveys, feedback boxes around the campus, direct feedback given to teaching or pastoral care staff). The move to formalise student representation in 2021 indicates that Whitecliffe values the student voice. In addition, there are student-led workshops such as yoga, meditation and arts</p> |

⁸ Whitecliffe contracted out a third-party online platform run by medical professionals.

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| | <p>therapy, which make the student body more involved in their school community and in looking after themselves.</p> <p>Whitecliffe has made positive progress in developing relationships with Māori and Pasifika (as was recommended at the previous EER), ensuring the organisation is culturally responsive to their students' needs. The achievement results show the support has mostly been effective.</p> <p>The pastoral care team is well-informed about the Codes and their requirements, and this knowledge is being passed on to other staff members. There is evidence of comprehensive monitoring and reporting on the support given to students, including analysis of data per campus and per school. There is a good understanding of issues affecting international students and how Whitecliffe addresses them. Understanding the support provided to other priority learner groups, i.e. Māori and Pasifika, would enhance the PTE's self-assessment practices in this area. While mostly effective, there is an opportunity to more systematically identify challenges faced by Māori and Pasifika students, and how best to support them.</p> |
| Conclusion: | <p>Whitecliffe provides wrap-around support to the students, effectively engaging and retaining them in their learning, where most successfully complete their studies. Robust monitoring and analysis informs Whitecliffe's practices on student support.</p> |

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

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Whitecliffe has a governance team with a proven track record of innovation. They have attracted a highly capable, well-experienced management team which has been effectively leading the organisation amidst changes in structures and systems, as well as the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Management and staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities; the organisation's values, vision and direction are clear. Academic leadership is effective, aided by new structures and strategies which are mostly firmly in place. The bottom-up approach empowers staff and gives them a sense of ownership in their jobs. A family culture is promoted, staff can express their views and feel listened to, and have opportunities</p> |

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| | <p>to further develop professionally. One challenge faced by a number of teaching staff is the lack of time to engage in research, which management is seeking to address.</p> <p>Since the change of ownership, Whitecliffe has invested significantly to support teaching and learning. The strategic approach to developing and increasing portfolio and programme offerings shows the PTE's innovation and responsiveness, despite an at times challenging operation environment. Among the many examples are the move to and investment in Grafton campus, the upgrades of various software, the development of pathways to higher levels of study – especially the new pathways to higher learning for Māori and Pasifika learners in the Manukau campus – and the venture into new fields to remain relevant and address needs.</p> <p>Whitecliffe's response to the Covid-19 pandemic was prompt and effective, ensuring both staff and students were supported. Whitecliffe has developed impressive and evolving Cloud-based infrastructure to support consistent and high-quality performance across its four campuses and different schools. This infrastructure was particularly supportive of the PTE operating and delivering remotely during extended lockdowns.</p> <p>Data is used effectively throughout the organisation, and there is a culture of continuous improvement. At various levels, there is a clear and open line of reporting and purposeful meetings. The governance and management team utilise thoughtfully the information received to further enhance the PTE's direction and operations.</p> |
| <p>Conclusion:</p> | <p>A high-calibre governance and management team is leading Whitecliffe in an effective and reflective way. This supports a positive student experience, and high and improving educational performance.</p> |

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | <p>Whitecliffe has an effective and systematic approach to managing important compliance accountabilities. Whitecliffe's leadership has strong networks and keeps current with evolving regulatory requirements. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thorough review of the quality management system (and merger of three systems) to ensure it is live and relevant • All NZQA attestations and annual requirements submitted on time • Programmes being delivered as approved, including monitoring required learning hours • Participation in external moderation and monitoring activities • Robust self-review of the Codes, and submission of required attestations on time • Management and monitoring of agents for international student recruitment • Comprehensive recording of international student files, and thorough knowledge of relevant staff members on the requirements of the international Code • Health and safety checks are regularly conducted, and reports are submitted on every campus. <p>Whitecliffe has developed an effective system to ensure all its compliance responsibilities are being met and monitored. A Cloud-based infrastructure is used effectively, and is a comprehensive, high-end portal and central repository of documents – from approved programmes to relevant meeting minutes, student information, and many other aspects of the PTE's operations.</p> <p>Staff are aware and informed of their compliance responsibilities within their roles, and there is clear oversight by key management depending on the area of compliance. This is reflected in Tertiary Education Commission and NZQA monitoring.</p> |

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| Conclusion: | Whitecliffe has systems and tools in place to effectively manage their compliance accountabilities. Review and monitoring is comprehensive, ongoing and effective. |
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Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Fashion programmes (New Zealand Certificate in Apparel and Fashion Technology (Pattern Making) Level 4; New Zealand Diploma in Apparel and Fashion Technology Level 5)

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Excellent |

2.2 Focus area: IT programmes (New Zealand Certificate in Information Technology Essentials Level 4; New Zealand Diploma in Networking Level 6; Bachelor of Applied Information Technology Level 7)

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| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Good |

2.3 Focus area: Master of Fine Arts (Level 9)

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|------------------|------------------|
| Performance: | Excellent |
| Self-assessment: | Good |

2.4 Focus area: International Student Support and Wellbeing

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| 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.

NZQA recommends that Whitecliffe Enterprises Limited:

- enhance the analysis of performance data and graduate destination data to make available meaningful, organisation-level analysis
- develop a whole-of-organisation, systematic approach to identify the additional challenges and the support required to ensure the effectivity and parity of student support provision
- ensure that staff members' workload includes consideration of their engagement in research activities, and that this is transparently monitored to assist degree monitoring requirements.⁹

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.

⁹ Whitecliffe has started putting in place initiatives to address the concern on staff workload.

Appendix 1¹⁰

Table 1. Qualification completion rate – overall

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|
| Whitecliffe | 83% | 89% | 85% |
| All tertiary providers | 60% | 62% | 62% |
| All PTE providers | 65% | 64% | 64% |
| All university providers | 64% | 64% | 65% |

Table 2. Qualification completion rate – Māori learners

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Whitecliffe | 83.0% | 77.30% | 86.20% |
| All tertiary providers | 54.90% | 57.40% | 57.00% |
| All PTE providers | 56.70% | 56.40% | 58.00% |
| All university providers | 51.40% | 50.50% | 52.00% |

Table 3. Qualification completion rate – Pasifika learners

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Whitecliffe | 77.60% | 81.80% | 70.40% |
| All tertiary providers | 55.30% | 54.60% | 54.00% |
| All PTE providers | 60.10% | 61.00% | 62.00% |
| All university providers | 49.00% | 47.20% | 48.00% |

Table 4. Course completion rate – overall

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Whitecliffe | 88.50% | 82.30% | 80.30% |
| All tertiary providers | 82.90% | 83.90% | 84.00% |
| All PTE providers | 79.30% | 80.90% | 79.00% |
| All university providers | 87.00% | 87.40% | 89.00% |

¹⁰ Whitecliffe College Self-Assessment Summary 2021/ Nga Kete, Tertiary SDR, July 2021

Table 5. Course completion rate – Māori learners

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Whitecliffe | 85.40% | 77.40% | 68.60% |
| All tertiary providers | 79.20% | 74.60% | 72.00% |
| All PTE providers | 70.00% | 71.40% | 69.00% |
| All university providers | 80.30% | 81.00% | 82.00% |

Table 6. Course completion rate – Pasifika learners

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Whitecliffe | 87.00% | 73.30% | 54.80% |
| All tertiary providers | 72.20% | 72.60% | 73.00% |
| All PTE providers | 73.70% | 73.20% | 72.00% |
| All university providers | 72.10% | 72.10% | 75.00% |

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud¹¹*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

¹¹ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

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 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, 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 2016. 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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