



# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Phlair International College

Date of report: 16 March 2010

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MoE Number: 8573  
NZQA Reference: C00012  
Date of EER visit: 25 November 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: Auckland

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: 81 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)

Sites: 60 Rockfield Road, Penrose

Phlair International College was established in 1978 and offers programmes in English as a second language (ESOL), the New Zealand Diploma in Business, and Christian studies.

Phlair has recently been acquired by Alphacrucis, another Christian college of higher education and vocational training. Alphacrucis has moved on to the Penrose site and will run Christian studies. Phlair will continue with the ESOL and business courses.

# Executive Summary

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Phlair International College**.

Key reasons for this are the following.

- The college has good course completion rates. The current course retention ratio is 83 per cent and the course completion ratio is 82 per cent. There is good evidence that students enhance their self-confidence and cultural awareness while studying at Phlair. These achievements and attributes increase their employment opportunities and evidence supports that this has positive community outcomes.
- The college is building relationships with stakeholders, including the Auckland Regional Migrants Services (ARMS), local business, local schools, and local communities. Phlair has been particularly proactive in promoting education to young Pasifika people.
- The tutors are well qualified and experienced. They are well placed to analyse student needs and provide appropriate, effective, and practical learning experiences for their students.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Phlair International College**

Key reasons for this are the following.

- Phlair has a system of course evaluations, staff appraisals, and needs assessment with stakeholders that generates information for some aspects of self-assessment. This information is valid but not systematic enough to inform strategic and business planning. Systematic self-assessment should result in evidence-based conclusions that lead to relevant and worthwhile improvements.
- Phlair has a student council comprising representatives from each class, which meets with senior management once every term. This is an effective forum for communication within the college as class representatives take their classmates' issues to the meetings and discuss meeting outcomes with their class. At the last meeting it was reported that five issues raised at the previous meeting had been resolved.
- Phlair's self-assessment plan was only published in September 2009, so it has not yet had the time to provide the required evidence-based conclusions that are prerequisites for systematic self-assessment. This information is valid but not systematic enough to inform strategic and business planning. Systematic self-

assessment should result in evidence-based conclusions that lead to relevant and worthwhile improvements.

## TEO response

Phlair has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

# 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](http://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 Phlair International College was:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support, including international students
- New Zealand Diploma in Business
- Oral English.

## 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 **Good**.

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

#### **Context**

The primary goal of most students at Phlair International College is improving their English language skills. In particular, Phlair offers a Certificate in Spoken English and a Certificate in Oral English. These courses focus on refining the pronunciation and listening skills of migrants and include training by an experienced speech therapist.

There is also a class of five international students in their first term, studying two subjects of the recently revised New Zealand Diploma in Business (NZDipBus).

## **Explanation**

The college has good course completion rates. Attendance and retention relate directly to outcomes and there is an adequate attendance system in place. The current course retention ratio is 83 per cent and the course completion ratio is 82 per cent. These are good results.

The Oral English course helps students achieve short-term and longer-term outcomes. Staff and students said it enabled them to communicate with each other, with their families, and with the community. For some, it helped them to gain employment and for many it provided a pathway to further education. Phlair's self-assessment confirmed this. This will enable these migrants to contribute to their local and wider communities.

The evaluation team was impressed by the English language skills of the Oral English class. The class was mainly older people, born abroad. About 20 per cent of the class were aiming to go on to further academic study, and 40 per cent were looking for employment. One, born in China, spoke passionately about how the work with the speech therapist had enabled her to pronounce the letters 'l' and 'r' so that native New Zealand speakers could understand her easily. Other class members agreed and added that they had become much more confident in using the telephone and enjoyed longer conversations with native speakers than they previously could sustain. The students gain in confidence and acquire useful skills. Ninety per cent of the class should achieve the certificates. These are very good outcomes.

The college needs to improve its graduate tracking system to gather more useful information for self-assessment. At the moment the system is limited to telephoning graduates three months after they finish. This reflects what was a TEC requirement for some courses, but in future the college should be more analytical and collect data that will inform its self-assessment and contribute to improvements.

## **1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?**

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

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

### **Context**

Phlair International College recognises present students, graduates, local employers, other education providers, Pasifika, migrants, and churches and social organisations as stakeholders.

### **Explanation**

Participants in the English language courses improve their language skills. Students, staff, and the college's self-assessment confirm these improvements and their value to the students. Not only are they communicating better and participating in community more but many are gaining employment or going on to further study.

The NZDipBus programme has a strong employment focus. The programme has been designed to emphasise New Zealand business skills, so the communication programme

focuses on cultural interaction while the business computing programme uses the software and processes that students will encounter at work in New Zealand. This gives the students better opportunities to gain employment.

The college is building relationships with some stakeholders. Phlair consults with two local Auckland Regional Migrants Services (ARMS) offices at least once every six months and gets feedback on their clients. This feedback confirms the value of the Oral English programme.

The college has taken a leading role in promoting education to young Pasifika people. As an example, Phlair organised a seminar aimed at promoting education to Pasifika youth and this was supported by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, (MINPAC), Career Services, employment agencies, and local colleges and Pasifika churches. The seminar was well received by its target audience. The college is discussing further such events with other supporting organisations.

### 1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

#### **Context**

Phlair identifies the needs of ESOL students by initial testing and discussion. The previous NZDipBus programme withered away and Phlair's academic advisory board has used that experience and advice from employers to devise a new programme. This was to have commenced in 2010 but a small group of international students was so attracted by the concept that the course started earlier, in September 2009.

#### **Explanation**

Phlair is a member of the Penrose Business Association and consults with small groups of local employers. These consultations have influenced the choice of subjects and style of presentation for the business course. Employers reinforce the need for students to have good language and communication skills.

The academic advisory board has designed an NZDipBus tailored to the needs of international students. Students said the course was well priced and that being able to pay in instalments was an advantage. Students and staff agreed that course activities were relevant and meaningful, and the college has determined that graduates will be well placed to gain employment in local freight, logistics, and manufacturing companies. The length of the course is matched to immigration criteria. This matching of needs should encourage more students to enrol for 2010.

## 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

### Context

All tutors have tertiary-level qualifications. Most of the ESOL teaching staff have a specialist qualification in this area. Two new staff have been recently appointed to teach the NZDipBus subjects.

### Explanation

The tutors and learners at Phlair interact freely and relate effectively to each other. There is good evidence to show that the business tutors are effective teachers, and although only working part time for Phlair they have made themselves available to help the students outside of class contact hours. The Oral English students spoke warmly of their tutors. These positive relationships and learner engagement are mutually supportive.

Assessment of the Oral English course is continuous, fair, and clearly understood. The tutor has good charts of results and there is evidence from these and the class of valid formative assessment. These assessments support learning and provide good evidence of achievement and improvement.

At the evaluation visit it was clear that the class and tutors were feeling the strain of covering the NZDipBus subject matter in ten weeks. The course had been running for seven weeks at the time of the review visit and only one formal assessment had been done. The students were clearly anxious about the amount of assessing that would have to take place in the remaining three weeks and the tutors were conscious of the need to discuss their timetables to ensure the students would be able to prove their competence.

## 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 **Adequate**.

### Context

Phlair has an induction programme for students. There is good information on the website, including a prospectus. Students receive a comprehensive course handbook. Tutors are the first line of support. The student welfare officer is also the receptionist but is supported by the registrar and the marketing manager.

### Explanation

Students said that generally tutors dealt successfully with any concerns or issues they had. There was evidence that tutors took a close interest in student well-being. The registrar at Phlair provides very good support for students' dealings with the Department of Immigration and StudyLink. There is good evidence that this support is managed well, although it does take up a great deal of the registrar's time because the students at Phlair find it difficult to handle these interactions by themselves.

Student support processes and materials need to be reviewed. There was some evidence that some student needs were not being met. One student failed to access necessary health services because he was not confident that his request could be handled in full confidentiality. There was no evidence of comprehensive hearing testing for students on ESOL programmes. The handbooks were comprehensive but there was no evidence through self-assessment or otherwise of how useful the students found them. The students on the NZDipBus programme were not well informed initially about the computing for business course. Students are more likely to achieve when timely advice and ongoing support is provided, so self-assessment needs to be established in this area.

The students' individual learning plans are not used to best effect. There was evidence that while all students have individual learning plans these are not being consulted and maintained by all staff. Management has noted this as an area for future action and improvement.

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

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

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

### **Context**

Phlair has recently been acquired by Alphacrucis, another Christian college for higher education and vocational training. Alphacrucis has moved on to the Penrose site and will run Christian studies. Phlair will continue with the ESOL and business courses.

### **Explanation**

Management has been successful in managing the change of ownership while continuing business as usual. Students had not noticed any changes and while the staff had varying degrees of understanding of what the change might mean they were unanimous in confirming that their teaching and the students' learning had continued as usual. There had been some classroom changes to accommodate extra students and staff, and bringing together two libraries is a "work in progress".

The college is committed to the best possible outcomes for the students. They want to see students gaining qualifications and employment and making a contribution to the community. Management sees the college providing a pathway that starts with building sufficient English language skills to move on to a business course, either at Phlair or at the Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT), which would lead to employment.

Management has established strong links with MIT, and recently a group of English language tutors from MIT visited to peer review the teaching at Phlair. Their findings were positive and Phlair's head of department is currently reviewing their feedback as a valuable input into the organisation's self-assessment.

## Part 2: Performance in focus areas

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

### 2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

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

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

#### **Context**

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

#### **Explanation**

Phlair is only just starting to build its capacity in self-assessment. The 2009 self-assessment plan published in September 2009 listed 12 initial focus areas. Quality improvement teams have been set up for the first two areas: governance and management, and international students. There was no evidence of the activity of either of these committees at the time of the review. These teams need to establish systematic self-assessment processes rather than conducting one-off assessments of programmes. The self-assessment plan is indicative of good intentions; however, the inconsistent use of present processes such as individual learning plans indicates that some improvement is required.

Phlair has a process for responding to student concerns. A student council comprising representatives from each class (around ten students) and senior management meet once every term. Each representative raises issues their class has identified. At the October 2009 meeting it was reported that five issues raised at the previous meeting had been resolved. Two issues were under action.

Phlair has adequate resources which are generally appropriately allocated and efficiently used. The building is in good condition and well maintained. Classrooms are generally adequate, although the evaluation team was surprised to find a class of five in a large classroom while the Oral English of 13 students was crammed into a much smaller classroom. There was good access to computers, and although there had been some problems with the system earlier in the year it is now operating satisfactorily.

There are appropriate delegations and decision-making rights. All staff that the evaluation team consulted were happy with their access to senior management and felt that their input was valued.

Individual performance of staff is managed effectively. Phlair has a robust recruitment and selection process in place. The tutors recently appointed to the NZDipBus programme have the necessary experience, skills, and attributes.

## 2.2 Focus area: Student support, including international students

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

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

### Context

See section 1.5 *How well are learners guided and supported?*

### Explanation

As noted above, the category of “international students” has been identified as a high priority area for self-assessment, but there is little evidence that this has started. At the time of the review, Phlair had five international and 74 domestic students.

Individual tutors provide a lot of support to students. The business communications tutor makes himself available to the class on Mondays and poses a set of reflective questions to help their learning. The Oral English tutor also involves her students in community activities. There is little evidence, however, of assessment of tutor support of students.

The student orientation checklist and the student handbooks are more weighted towards fulfilling compliance requirements than engaging the students. The checklist requires students to sign to acknowledge what “they have been informed of and received” and is not engaging. The student handbooks too are mainly about policies and procedures and are less user-friendly than the handbooks seen at similar organisations. Students are advised to consult a staff member if they are unable to find the answers to their questions in the handbook, so evaluation of the handbooks and evaluation of tutor support are related.

The student welfare officer has other duties. This means that sometimes the students cannot raise an issue as the welfare officer is busy with these duties. A complaints box was put at reception so that students could file their issue at such times. There have not been any complaints in three years, but this could be due to students’ unwillingness or inability to put complaints in writing. There needs to be some assessment of this system.

## 2.3 Focus area: New Zealand Diploma in Business

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

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

### Context

Phlair have recently revived the NZDipBus programme using the new NZQA prescription. Using its assessment of the previous programme it has changed to a daytime programme and raised the entry standards.

### Explanation

Phlair has put together a programme to match international students’ needs for New Zealand orientation and a qualification that will improve their immigration status and have good employment prospects. The head of vocational studies outlined the college’s previous experience and the improvements put in place by the academic board to make this course

more effective. The programme requires that students pass the level 5 papers and attain a New Zealand Institute of Management certificate after one year of study, thereby also gaining some immigration points.

The students on the course confirmed that this course is well priced and that they can pay in instalments. Students appreciated that the subjects chosen and the teaching emphasis gave them a New Zealand orientation and increased their appreciation of other cultures. This is important, as although many international students already have qualifications from their native countries they need to learn to apply their skills and knowledge in the New Zealand context.

Although this course is well taught and generally well resourced the students and the tutors considered that ten weeks was too short a time for the learning required for two papers. Effectively they have 20 hours contact time per week and must do 20 hours on assignments also. Management is aware of these concerns and knows that evaluation and assessment are required.

## 2.4 Focus area: Oral English course: Certificate in Spoken English and Certificate in Oral English.

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

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

### **Context**

This course focuses on improving the pronunciation and listening skills that migrants lack by incorporating training by an experienced speech therapist. One tutor provides the backbone of the course with daily tests and work on basic skills. A speech therapist does some class work and works with individuals, and a business tutor teaches the class on how to gain employment including the preparation of CVs.

### **Explanation**

As set out in section 1.1 above, the learners on this course achieve very good outcomes. The students spoke highly of the work the speech therapist did and would like even more assistance of this kind. They also appreciated learning how to gain employment and enjoyed having a variety of teachers. Staff noted that these preferences had already been identified on course evaluation forms and had led to increased allocations of time with the speech therapist.

The students need further opportunities to practise and improve their oral English outside the course. The tutor emphasises practising class skills at home but the students could be given more support including retention of the CDs that go with their textbooks, more intermediate readers in the library or introduction to wider libraries, introduction to government and local assistance agencies, and more opportunities to converse with native speakers of New Zealand English.

# 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 **confident** in the educational performance of **Phlair International College**.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **not yet confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Phlair International College**.

# Actions Required and Recommendations

## Future actions

Because NZQA is Not Yet Confident in Phlair International College's capability in self-assessment, NZQA will contact Phlair within 20 working days of this report to agree upon an appropriate quality improvement plan.

The plan is intended to deliver improvements that will enable Phlair to achieve a judgement of at least Confident in relation to capability in self-assessment. Implementation of this plan will be monitored by NZQA. When the plan has been completed, or at any time deemed necessary by NZQA, another external evaluation and review will be scheduled.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the college:

- use evaluation to strengthen organisational self-assessment
- assess the usefulness of present processes such as individual learning plans
- assess what improvements to the graduate tracking system would gather more useful information for self-assessment
- review student support processes, staff welfare officer duties, and handbook materials
- evaluate and assess its New Zealand Diploma in Business programme
- assess what increased practical support can be provided for students learning English to enhance long-term outcomes.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E [eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz)

[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)