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External Evaluation and Review Report

South Pacific College of Natural
Medicine

Date of report: 2 November 2018

About South Pacific College of Natural Medicine

The South Pacific College of Natural Medicine (SPCNM) offers on-campus and online programmes for domestic and international students in the field of naturopathy and natural medicine.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	8/12 Arthur Street, Ellerslie, Auckland
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic 168 (83 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)) Māori 8.2 per cent, Pasifika 4.6 per cent International: five enrolled, three in New Zealand, two studying online from their home country
Number of staff:	Eight full-time, 10 part-time
TEO profile:	South Pacific College of Natural Medicine SPCNM offers a Bachelor of Natural Medicine, and the New Zealand Certificate in Study and Career Preparation (Level 4), and a Certificate in Personal Interest: http://www.spcnm.ac.nz/programmes/
Last EER outcome:	NZQA last evaluated SPCNM in 2014 and was Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bachelor of Natural Medicine• International Student Welfare and Support
MoE number:	8642
NZQA reference:	C30249
Dates of EER visit:	8 and 9 August 2018

Summary of Results

SPCNM continues to provide programmes and supports learners to a good standard. Management acknowledges that monitoring of compliance needs to improve.

Confident in educational performance

- SPCNM has consistently exceeded its Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) course completion targets in the four years since the last evaluation.
- The achievement rates for online students and on-campus students are equal, but Māori and Pasifika student achievement rates are lower than others.
- The Bachelor of Natural Medicine provides a recognised credential in an unregulated sector.
- Graduates gain a wide range of employment related directly to their studies.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Programmes are well structured and resourced. Lecturers are highly experienced. Assessment is validated by effective moderation. Resources are relevant and appropriate, including 'touchboards'.
- Students receive exemplary support and are well engaged in their learning.
 - Governance and management is clearly focused on the organisational purpose, well engaged in the sector, focused on student achievement, and supports and develops staff.
 - SPCNM recognises that while it has a structured focus on managing its compliance accountabilities, some areas could be further strengthened.
 - The organisation has effective reflective processes, including annual programme reviews and monitoring achievement and value. There could be more emphasis on reviewing the comparative achievement of Māori and Pasifika.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Course completion rates have consistently exceeded TEC commitments for each year since the previous evaluation. SPCNM benchmarks its performance against four other similar PTEs, and achievement and completion rates compare well. The 2016 retention rate is 7 per cent below the overall PTE average rate (80 per cent). However, SPCNM notes that most withdrawals are due to events in students' lives outside of the college, rather than due to study-related matters. (See Appendix 1, Table 2.)</p> <p>Table 3 shows the effect of this attrition in the relatively lower qualification completion rate compared to the overall subsector but is on a par with four benchmarked similar providers.</p> <p>The organisation tracked achievement rates for online and on-campus students (overall and by each individual course) from 2014 to 2016, showing parity in achievement, (1-4 per cent variance). The pass rate for on-campus increased from 92 to 94 per cent, and for online from 89 to 92 per cent. This is uncommon, as online students usually achieve at lower rates.</p> <p>There are three international students on campus, and two studying from their home countries. Their achievement rates are equal to domestic students and they receive the appropriate support to achieve well.</p> <p>Māori and Pasifika enrolment numbers are relatively low, and the organisation knows its individual students well. Data provided at the time of the evaluation indicated that Māori and Pasifika achievement is slightly lower than other students. This is an area of self-assessment that receives less focus than overall student data.</p>
Conclusion:	Students are achieving well, and the organisation has strong overall review processes to track student progress. SPCNM could place more emphasis on monitoring and lifting Māori and Pasifika achievement rates.

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

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Graduates are employed in a range of roles related to their studies: clinics, retail, manufacturing and research. This indicates that graduates are gaining high value from their studies. Feedback from stakeholders indicates graduates have a good level of technical knowledge, personal skills, risk and safety awareness and professional attitudes appropriate for these roles.</p> <p>Stakeholders also noted that graduates have the confidence to use their new skills and knowledge in clinics and are also aware of when to refer to more experienced staff. The on-site clinic adds value to students' learning, and to the community by providing natural health advice and products.</p> <p>The natural health sector is unregulated, and the Bachelor of Natural Medicine is providing a level of credibility. Graduates can gain membership with one of the two professional associations in New Zealand (New Zealand Association of Medical Herbalists (NZAMH), and Naturopaths and Medical Herbalists of New Zealand (NMHNZ)).</p> <p>SPCNM has effective processes to survey graduates post-graduation, and to gain input from its industry sector to determine the value of its programmes to industry and graduates. Some lecturing staff are current practitioners, which further enhances this connection with industry and graduates.</p>
Conclusion:	Graduates, the industry sector and the community gain significant value from the programmes offered. This is effectively determined through active, ongoing relationships and surveys.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Most students are mature rather than recent school leavers; they value the flexibility of the degree programme and studying online or on-campus, with one-on-one support, part-time or full-time. This allows students to fit study into their other life activities.</p> <p>The New Zealand Certificate in Career and Study Preparation (Level 4) is good preparation for entry to the degree (in 2016, 70 per cent of enrolments graduated). It has helped many students.</p> <p>SPCNM has rigorous processes for developing and checking assessments before use to ensure they are fit for purpose. SPCNM conducts internal post-assessment moderation and external moderation with three similar institutions for an objective review of assessment and marking practice. There is a strong emphasis on giving students advice on avoiding academic misconduct. The validity of assessments is monitored. SPCNM's herb garden adds considerable value by providing students with fresh herbs for making health products.</p> <p>SPCNM holds weekend workshops for online students who can attend the campus. Students can also attend the weekend seminars offered to the public.</p> <p>The organisation's connections in the natural health sector supports the ongoing relevance of the degree content. There is an on-site clinic for the practical application of theoretical knowledge. Employers note that the clinic experience prepared students well for the workplace, both engaging with clients and as practitioners. There are regular clinic audits to review and ensure ongoing health and safety.</p> <p>Annual programme reviews are detailed and well considered. They add value through ongoing improvements, such as adding classroom 'touchboards' and current good practice in natural medicine. (See 1.6 for compliance comment.)</p>
Conclusion:	Programmes are well designed and delivered, and effectively match the needs of learners and other stakeholders. Effective planning and resourcing contributes to learners' success.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students receive a high level of support online and on-campus and engage effectively with their learning.</p> <p>SPCNM monitors the activity of online students through Moodle by looking at discussion boards, downloads and interactions with lecturers. Students can create communities of learning online. All students feel they are an integral part of the PTE and receive highly effective support. There is a clear, positive rapport between students and lecturers. Engagement with staff and access to the fresh herb garden, library and the on-site clinic together provide an all-round effective support network.</p> <p>Students receive feedback in a timely manner after submitting assignments, with clear expectations for assessments, including referencing and SPCNM's policy on academic misconduct.</p> <p>Four student representatives have direct access to the management team, which both online and on-campus students have access to and appreciate. For the first two years, a high number of students study online; they have access to both electronic surveys as well as participating in the SGID² focus group course feedback during on-site weekends. Some students drop out in the first two years. It may be worth exploring if there is adequate support, and if the online survey effectively identifies why students drop out. On-campus students have student representatives and the SGID discussions. SPCNM could explore how well this combination works to support students.</p> <p>SPCNM provides international students with support to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. No concerns were noted at this evaluation.</p>
Conclusion:	The organisation provides a range of effective support processes for students and monitors the impact of the support. Students succeed, and feedback indicates a high level of engagement in their learning. SPCNM may need to further review the effectiveness of support and survey processes for online students.

² Small Group Instructional Diagnostic <https://www.uwb.edu/tlc/faculty/sgid>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>SPCNM has a clear purpose and direction, and has established management teams and systems appropriate for its size and context. There is a collaborative, reflective culture and an open and inclusive communication style across all levels. The organisation has hired suitable lecturers with extensive experience in the natural health sector. Most lecturers have appropriate qualifications for lecturing at degree level. However, the monitor's report notes that not all hold a qualification one step above the level they are lecturing at. (See 1.6 for compliance comments.)</p> <p>Lecturing resources are appropriate for the programmes offered (i.e. an extensive library, on-site herb garden, on-site clinic, an interface for on-campus students and one for online students).</p> <p>Staff are supported to undertake ongoing study and stay current with changes and good practice in their fields. SPCNM has a research plan for current and future research activity. (See Appendix 1, Table 5 for research information.)</p> <p>Staff culture and performance is effectively monitored through a range of processes (e.g. lecturing observations, review of learner achievement, staff survey, and moderation of assessment).</p> <p>The academic board meets monthly, reviews academic matters, and analyses a range of data to monitor learner achievement, (e.g. by subject, paper, course or level).</p> <p>SPCNM has used consultants for strategic advice and guidance, to strengthen the governance (i.e. management split, reviewing financial viability). The PTE reviews its quality management system (QMS) as scheduled to ensure it meets all requirements. There are some areas of the QMS that could be more detailed (e.g. to define when and how learner achievement is compared for parity across ethnicities, for priority learners).</p>
Conclusion:	SPCNM has a strong focus on supporting achievement through exemplary resourcing and lecturing. The PTE uses effective structures and processes to maintain organisational purpose and direction and uses consultants to complement staff skills.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>While SPCM has well-planned processes to monitor compliance, the focus has been primarily on engaging students in their study and maintaining currency with natural health practices.</p> <p>The most recent degree monitor's report³ (2017) identified several areas that needed improvement. The key issues were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unnotified changes to the programme • staff qualifications and research priorities • assessments were not kept for the required timeframe • high attrition rates • high student workloads. <p>In response to the degree monitor's report, SPCNM's management has recognised the need for better compliance monitoring and has submitted an action plan to NZQA to address all issues. NZQA is monitoring progress against this plan and is satisfied that the action plan is appropriate and is addressing the issues. Also, the academic board has been authorised to have an increased focus on compliance monitoring, which is now in place.</p> <p>During the EER period, NZQA determined that SPCNM was in breach of Rule 18, because while three international students' files documented that they had studied in the English medium, it did not specifically confirm this was for at least two years.</p> <p>The organisation has few international students. There are five currently enrolled, and two are studying from their home country. SPCNM demonstrated active monitoring of compliance with the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016. No concerns were identified at this evaluation.</p>
Conclusion:	SPCNM has well considered processes to monitor its compliance responsibilities, although the degree monitor's review in 2017 identified some gaps. The organisation has plans to address the areas of concern and has strengthened its capability for future compliance monitoring.

³ SPCNM is approved by NZQA to appoint its own degree monitor.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Bachelor of Natural Medicine

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good

2.2 Focus area: International Students: wellbeing and support

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory, but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that South Pacific College of Natural Medicine:

- Collect and analyse retention information to determine their ability to influence or improve student retention rates.
- Develop processes to improve the monitoring and reporting of the parity of results for Māori and Pasifika students.

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.

NZQA requires that South Pacific College of Natural Medicine:

- Comply with the English language requirements as specified under Rule 18 of the NZQF Programme and Accreditation Rules 2018, to confirm their English language proficiency. SPCNM is required to make sure staff understand the requirements of Rule 18 and apply them consistently.

Appendix 1

Information provided here is as supplied by the organisation.

Table 1. Student enrolment by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percentage
European	89%
Maori	9%
Pacific	3%
Asian	7%
Other	4%

Table 2. Course completions data for 2017

Course completions for 2017

815 course enrolments were reported to the Ministry of Education in the December 2017 Single Data Return. The course completion statistics are as follows:

Successful completion: 743

Unsuccessful completion: 8

Withdrew or did not complete: 63

The SPCNM attrition rate in 2017 was below the national average. The majority of respondents who had withdrawn, did so due to significant life events that took precedence over study, or that made it impossible to continue. The majority of respondents retain a favourable and positive view of SPCNM despite discontinuing their studies.

Table 3: 2016 Education Performance Data (EPI). (TEC course completion commitment 70 per cent)

EPI category	SPCNM (level 7)	PTE sector (level 7-8)
Course Completion	84%	87%
Qualification Completion	65%	90%
Retention	73%	80%

Table 4. Māori and Pasifika achievement data

Enrolment and Completion - Maori and Pasifika

Learner Ethnicity	2014			2015			2016			2017			2018		
	Enrolled	Completed	%	Enrolled	Completed	%	Enrolled	Completed	%	Enrolled	Completed	%	Enrolled	Completed	%
Maori	6	3	50%	22	6	27%	17	8	47%	11	5	45%	18		
Pasifika	1	0	0%	4	1	0.25%	1	1	100%	1	0	0%	8		

Table 5. Research**Research Plan for 2018:**

	Name	Topic	Output	Completion Date
1.0	Journal / Magazine / Newspaper Articles			
1.1	Hill, W., Wesseling, K. Standen, C.,	Effectiveness of SPCNM's herb garden as a teaching & learning tool.	Published article. Target: To be published	<i>October 2018*</i>
1.2	Mees, K., Carruthers, R., Meikle, C.	Case study: Diabetes education for the newly diagnosed	Published article. Target: Integrative Medicine: A clinician's Journal	<i>October 2018*</i>
1.3	Carruthers, R., Matthews, H., Blackmore, K.	Case study: Fibromyalgia in a client with breast implants	Published article. Target: Integrative Medicine: A clinician's Journal	<i>December 2018</i>
1.4	Hill, W., Brachi, N.	Case study: Sinusitis	Published article. Target: Integrative Medicine: A clinician's Journal	<i>December 2018</i>
1.5	Blackmore, K.	Case study: Healing of a radiation injury with antioxidants and anti- inflammatory therapies	Published article. Target: Integrative Medicine: A clinician's Journal	<i>October 2018*</i>
1.6	Shaw, S., Carruthers, R., Paxton, P.	Bones of Education	Published article. Target: Journal of Educational Studies (USP)	<i>Accepted for publication</i>
1.7	Matthews, H., Shaw, S., Paxton, P.	Working title: Contextual International Education Challenges with Teaching Anatomy	To be published (target journal not yet identified)	<i>December 2018*</i>
1.8	Carruthers, R., Wright St- Clair, V., Smythe, L.	Are we being holistic?	Published article. Journal of Alternative & Complementary medicine	<i>October 2018*</i>
1.9	Andrews, J.	Homeopathy – The Ultra-high dilution problem	NZ Council of Homeopathy publication	<i>October 2018</i>

Degree monitor's comment 2017:

'A number of staff have forthcoming publications in relevant areas. It should be noted that institutional research in-house publications into pedagogical styles or outcomes do not count as research in the field being taught. Staff however., have presented subject related papers at two international conferences in 2017.'

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document *Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review* available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. 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: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>. 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 fraud⁴*
- *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.*

⁴ 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 according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are 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.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which 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.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 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 and/or 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 External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013. 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). The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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