



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Alphacrucis Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 8 March 2011

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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.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Location:	60 Rockfield Road Penrose Auckland
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1993
Number of students:	Domestic: 71 International: 24
Number of staff:	Five full-time staff and 13 contracted staff (mainly tutors).
Scope of active accreditation:	Alphacrucis Limited (Alphacrucis) currently delivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate in Christian Ministries (Level 4)• Diploma in Christian Ministries (Level 5)• Diploma of Ministry Development (Level 5)• Diploma in Christian Ministry Development (Level 6)
Sites:	Penrose and North Shore, Auckland Alphacrucis currently delivers the Certificate in Christian Ministries (Level 4) to 14 students at its North Shore site.
Distinctive characteristics:	Alphacrucis is the recognised trainer of Christian ministries within the Pentecostal denomination of the Assemblies of God movement. Its focus is on preparing students for a “calling” in ministry as much as a career.

Students are enrolled from locations throughout New Zealand as the PTE offers a distance-learning model of training as well as classroom-based delivery at its Penrose and North Shore sites.

Recent significant changes:	Alphacrucis is now the shareholder of Phlair International College. The two PTEs share the same governance, management, staff, and policies and processes but are funded separately by the Tertiary Education Commission (Student Achievement Component funding) for their domestic learners. Since 2009, both PTEs have operated from what was previously the Phlair International College training site.
Previous quality assurance history:	Alphacrucis was previously quality assured in 2008 by NZQA under the audit system. Only one requirement was not met, relating to medical and travel insurance.
Other:	Alphacrucis Limited has changed its name from Southern Cross College New Zealand since its 2008 NZQA audit.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review of Alphacrucis Limited included the following focus area:

- Christian studies.

The PTE delivers Christian studies at levels 4-6 via classroom and distance learning.

The mandatory focus areas were:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- International students.

The three focus areas above were sufficient to give the evaluators an accurate representation of performance across the organisation.

3. 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 evaluation team for this EER of Alphacrucis Limited comprised one lead evaluator and one team evaluator. The team visited the PTE for two days at its site in Auckland.

The staff, students, and external stakeholders interviewed as part of the EER included:

- Alphacrucis staff: CEO, academic dean, academic director, head of Christian studies, lecturers, administration manager, local church coordinator.
- Alphacrucis students: current domestic and international students. Campus-based students were interviewed face to face and the distance-learning students were interviewed by telephone.
- External stakeholders: a small number of key stakeholders who represent a large number of churches and students studying at Alphacrucis. One of these stakeholders is also a member of the Alphacrucis Council (previously the board of directors).

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Alphacrucis Limited**.

Students and graduates of the Christian ministries programme contribute positively to their local church and communities. There was strong evidence to show that the students' academic, spiritual, and personal development experienced as part of their study successfully equips them for their roles in their families and communities as well as for leadership and other roles in the church.

Alphacrucis students achieve well academically. Course completion rates have exceeded 87 per cent for the past three years. However, qualification completion rates were not clear because there has been little collation or analysis of comparative data in this area.

Students benefit from being able to seamlessly progress to higher levels of study. Many students take up this opportunity, resulting in over 50 per cent of students exiting Alphacrucis with higher levels of skills and competency.

The good course completion and progression rates confirm stakeholder and student feedback that they have high levels of satisfaction with, and confidence in, the content, standard, and relevance of Alphacrucis courses.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Alphacrucis Limited**

The merging of the two PTEs required several stages of restructuring. Alphacrucis has since initiated a purposeful and comprehensive self-assessment process which engages all levels of the organisation, from governance to support staff. A self-assessment plan sets out the organisation's priorities and includes the PTE's relationship with Alphacrucis Australia regarding academic quality and procedures for assuring consistency of assessments.

The positive approach to organisation-wide self-assessment and a clear focus on continuous improvement has led to several key changes to date, for example the strengthening of consistency and fairness of marked assignments. Self-assessment of some programme areas and activities is in the process of review, while others have yet to enter the formal self-assessment cycle.

Ongoing analysis of data on student progression, course and qualification completions by delivery model, and other indicators was not available but could be expected to inform the PTE's self-assessment process and its drive to demonstrate excellence.

TEO response

Alphacrucis Limited has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Findings¹

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**.

A high level of personal and spiritual growth is achieved by students studying at Alphacrucis. The evaluation team heard from the students, tutors, and stakeholders that students developed increased communication and leadership skills as a result of their study. There was strong evidence to show that the majority of students also experience a positive transition in their own lives as their characters are developed through the personal and spiritual growth offered by the courses.

Alphacrucis students also have a high achievement rate in successfully completed courses (parts of a qualification). Students have achieved course completion rates of over 87 per cent consistently over the past three years. However, the PTE does not measure comparative qualification completion data to support this high achievement. Greater analysis of programme achievement data could identify high qualification achievement levels, since course completion rates are high and student withdrawals very low (one student in 2010).

Programmes are well designed to enable the students to progress seamlessly to higher levels of study within Alphacrucis. Although the PTE does not currently collect or analyse specific data on internal progression, 2010 data showed that over 50 per cent of level 4 students had subsequently enrolled for level 5. The evaluation team heard evidence from the students and external stakeholders that this higher level of achievement better prepares them for the positions they hold and their ability to contribute more positively to their churches and communities.

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 **Good**.

Students and stakeholders reported that students' personal, spiritual, and theological growth is valued by the students, their church, and the wider community. Some students identified that this development of character has improved their relationships and communication with their family and with the church community in leadership roles.

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

Stakeholders highly value the outcome of the ministry training. Its value and relevance is clearly evidenced by the number of students who initially enrol at Alphacrucis on the recommendation of their church leaders, and the number of graduates who continue on with ministry or leadership roles within their churches. There was also evidence of the demand for places exceeding those available.

Self-assessment shows that the majority of graduates continue with voluntary work and in many cases gain paid employment in church positions. The PTE has anecdotal evidence that some graduates gain paid employment in their churches and communities after a two to three-year period of voluntary or other work. Alphacrucis recognises the value of collating and analysing graduate destination data and is currently developing a stronger process for this, including a revised graduation survey and the inclusion of information gathered through its recently re-invigorated alumni association. This strengthened self-assessment will enable Alphacrucis to clearly demonstrate the value of the programmes.

Alphacrucis conducts a comprehensive and extensive consultation of stakeholders. It gathers formal and informal data to inform its programme development via close, continuous engagement with participating churches and with the wider Assembly of God movement. A full and comprehensive report of these findings was made available to the evaluation team.

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 **Good**.

The needs of learners and other stakeholders are well matched by this PTE. Alphacrucis maintains a close relationship with participating churches and proactively uses student evaluations, stakeholder surveys, one-to-one meetings, national conference, facilitator meetings, regional pastor meetings, and focus groups to gather a breadth of rich data. This data informs the programme review.

Examples of how programmes and activities have been modified to match the needs of learners and other stakeholders include a number of initiatives: delivery in Korean for Korean students at the North Shore site; study-intensive options that enable students to complete their study in a shorter timeframe; block-week tutorials for distance students delivered by guest tutors who are experts in their field; several students being advanced to higher-level training mid-year in order to better match their learning needs; and IT support for students new to online study.

Alphacrucis programmes are well designed, enabling students to progress from level 4 to level 6 in Christian studies with the option of distance learning and on-campus delivery. There has been an increase in enrolments from both the North and South Islands, as well as reported increases in waiting lists for places, which indicates that the needs and expectations of sponsoring churches relating to quality and relevance of the learning are being matched.

The evaluation team heard from campus-based, distance-learning, domestic and international students that the practical application of the theory has helped them to develop spiritually, academically, and in their all-round personal development.

The evaluation team saw many examples of how Alphacrucis is proposing to strengthen self-assessment. An example would be gathering more valuable data and its deeper analysis, which will in turn provide Alphacrucis with continued actions for improvement.

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 **Good**.

The teaching is very effective at Alphacrucis, whether in the classroom or for supported distance learning. This is evidenced by the high course completion rates, coupled with positive student and stakeholder feedback. The evaluation team was impressed with the high quality of teaching staff employed at Alphacrucis. The tutors bring a wealth of professional and academic experience and expertise in the field of theology to their role.

It was also clear that the tutors have passion and drive to see the students succeed. Their commitment extends to providing email and home phone contacts for students needing to contact them outside delivery hours. Student feedback identified that students respect their tutor as experts in their field and as mentors who offer a high level of student support.

Alphacrucis funds tutors to attend relevant national and international conferences, supports them to maintain collegial professional relationships with staff from other teaching institutions, arranges professional development (e.g. tutoring adult learners, cultural responsiveness), and includes peer observations for tutors as part of self-assessment. The organisation's tutors are part-time and most routinely teach at other, similar institutions or at university. For example, one tutor spent two weeks in 2009 delivering a colloquium at Alphacrucis Sydney.

Self-assessment has recently identified the need for a further step in the moderation process to check all the marks at the end of a programme to ensure consistency. Alphacrucis is developing external moderation with Alphacrucis Sydney, through which it will become part of a multi-partner moderation arrangement of similar institutions in Australia.

The PTE's performance in this area could be strengthened through the review of data over time which could be used, for example, to identify trends or changes in qualification, course, and paper completions by delivery model and year, and for the purposes of comparison with other, similar providers.

The online computer system Moodle has allowed tutors to more closely track and respond quickly to student progress indicators such as online discussion participation and timeliness of assignment submissions. Electronic submission of assignments has meant that tutors can respond with marks and feedback to students within a matter of a day or two, if not hours – a change that students identified as significantly enhancing their academic progress.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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 **Good**.

Alphacrucis students receive high quality guidance and support from the PTE. The nature and design of the Christian ministries programme is such that organisational and face-to-face support is available for both distance and on-campus students. Sponsoring churches have a prior relationship with their church members who decide to take up Christian ministries study, but Alphacrucis strengthens this relationship through formal agreements with churches and church-based facilitators and mentors (often selected by students) and the provision of support manuals for such roles, as well as visits from Alphacrucis staff.

Students on campus have access to the campus pastor, and are also guided and supported in a face-to-face situation by their tutors and other academic staff. The evaluation team heard evidence from domestic, international, and distance students of tutors' commitment to building effective relationships with students to support their academic, spiritual, and personal growth. Tutors provide distance and classroom-based students with regular contact and feedback through the Moodle online system, and also provide their home and out-of-hours email contacts to students so that they can be accessed whenever necessary.

The tutors and academic dean have an open-door policy for academic support and guidance which has been well received by the students. Students who spoke to the evaluation team identified academic support and guidance as an important factor in their ability and decision to study at successively higher levels. A measure of this success is that some of these students were planning to start their third programme of study in 2011.

Self-assessment of support and guidance to date has resulted in actions such as the appointment of a first point of contact for all distance students, the establishment of an 0800 line, and frequent email contact to support a visit to each distance student each year.

The PTE plans to improve its evaluation processes in 2011, with the aim of obtaining more useful data about students' views on their study experience as a whole. The data gathered to date has been obtained in the main through students' exit surveys, which are invariably positive about the quality of support that Alphacrucis provides to students.

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 **Good**.

Alphacrucis aspires to mirror the provision of Alphacrucis Sydney in Australia for its New Zealand-based students and be a high quality provider of higher-level qualifications in Christian ministries. Its formal association with Alphacrucis Sydney reflects this aspiration,

which is very clearly articulated and supported by all staff. The PTE's strategic plan is written by the executive team in consultation with staff and adopted by the Alphacrucis Council. The plan's implementation is driven by management, with the active involvement of staff and students.

Since the merger with Phlair International, the council has invested significant resource to support student educational achievement: refurbishing the Auckland campus, building an on-site gymnasium that doubles as an event facility, and supporting high quality professional development for Alphacrucis staff. A recently purchased new student management system is expected to provide valuable data on student enrolment, progression, and achievement.

The PTE's leadership style is open and transparent. The manager models the positive and regular communication that he encourages throughout the organisation in his own communications with staff and students.

Evidence was presented that outlined management's approach to securing organisation-wide commitment to self-assessment. The council and staff engaged in in-depth discussions on the philosophy and practice of self-assessment, before a formal commitment was made to a whole-of-organisation approach.

Although the self-assessment cycle is in its early stages, as evidenced by the actions in the organisation's meta-plan, the PTE's purposeful approach to this process has already led to several improvements in its quality management system, processes and policies, as well as benefits to students as discussed earlier. Given its robust design and organisation-wide commitment, Alphacrucis can expect its self-assessment process to continue to deliver ongoing benefits.

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 **Good**.

2.2 Focus area: 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 **Good**.

2.3 Focus area: Christian studies

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

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

Further actions

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

Appendix

Regulatory 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 (ITP Quality) 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).

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/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>

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