

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Alphacrucis Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 3 September 2015

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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

Name of TEO:	Alphacrucis Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	1 February 1993
Location:	60 Rockfield Road, Penrose, Auckland
Delivery sites:	As above
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diploma in Christian Ministries (Level 5)• Certificate in Christian Ministries (Level 4)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes; including under 18-year-olds, although all current international students are 18 years of age or over.
Number of students:	Domestic: 32 EFTS (equivalent full-time students) (123 students); 10 per cent Māori and 18 per cent Pasifika International: nil
Number of staff:	Nineteen full-time equivalents – all staff are employed by Alphacrucis in NZ and work seamlessly between Alphacrucis International College and Alphacrucis Ltd.
Scope of active accreditation:	In addition to the courses currently delivered, Alphacrucis Ltd holds accreditation and approval for a range of courses and unit standards in the fields of religion, business and other related areas, up to level 7.

Distinctive characteristics:	Alphacrucis Ltd is a faith-based PTE located in Penrose, Auckland. The PTE is jointly owned by the Assemblies of God in New Zealand Inc and Alphacrucis Australia.
Recent significant changes:	N/A
Previous quality assurance history:	The previous external evaluation and review (EER) of Alphacrucis Ltd was conducted in March 2011. NZQA was Confident in both Alphacrucis Ltd's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Other:	This report should be read in conjunction with the EER report for Alphacrucis International College, March 2015.

The council and management of Alphacrucis in NZ run two educational entities called :

- Alphacrucis Ltd, which it has owned and operated since the early 1990s
- Alphacrucis International College was purchased by Alphacrucis in NZ in 2009 as Phlair International College and renamed Alphacrucis International College.

The retention of both entities rather than full merger has been continued to allow for Tertiary Industry Commission (TEC)-funded courses (through Alphacrucis International College) and unfunded courses (through Alphacrucis Ltd) to be offered.

Alphacrucis in NZ runs single governance and management bodies for both entities; staff and premises are shared. Some of the courses are identical, but Alphacrucis International College also has some unique courses. The management preserves a distinction between the entities as follows:

- Each entity has its own Ministry of Education identification number
- Each has its own student management system and hence student records
- Each processes an individual single data

return

- Each is a signatory in its own right to the international Code of Practice
- There are separate graduation certificates and records (common graduation ceremony)
- Students are made aware of which entity they are studying under (although in reality most simply regard themselves as Alphacrucis students).

NZQA agreed to conduct two EERs in parallel, with:

- One field visit where the evaluators examined both organisations simultaneously
- Joint and separate delivery focus areas
- Two separate reports which contain some common sections
- Independent ratings – there was no guarantee that the Statements of Confidence or ratings would be the same for both entities.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of this EER included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management and strategy
- International students

The other focus area selected was:

- Diploma in Christian Ministries (Level 5) – selected because it is the primary programme offered by Alphacrucis Ltd. The programme includes both blended learning and internship.

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 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.

The EER was conducted in mid-February 2015. Prior to this EER, the lead evaluator visited the Alphacrucis Ltd site and met with the principal to discuss and agree on the scope and format of the EER visit. A self-assessment summary and a range of other applicable documents were made available prior to the EER visit.

The EER visit took place over three days, when the evaluation team, consisting of two evaluators, reviewed a range of documentation and met with the principal; the academic director and other executive leadership team; two groups of lecturers; the library manager; Māori liaison officer; student support staff; three groups of students plus several individual students; and external stakeholders. Phone and Skype conversations were held with four board members in Australia and New Zealand, as well as with a number of graduates and external stakeholders.

As previously discussed, this EER was unique in that the field work component of the evaluation covered two organisations in parallel.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

The reasons for this include:

- Learners at Alphacrucis Ltd are achieving good results. TEC educational performance data supplemented by the PTE's own data for 2014 indicates that course completion at Alphacrucis Ltd was on average 82 per cent in 2014. Learners acquire relevant knowledge and skills for ministry work, gain maturity, and continue to be motivated throughout their studies. Most of the learners complete courses and gain qualification(s); (see Findings 1.1). The achievement rates for face-to-face students are slightly higher than for their distance learning counterparts.
- The organisation is strongly outcomes-focused and recognises that students must receive good value from their experience and their qualification. This is borne out by, for instance, the fact that 43 of the 57 graduates from the Diploma in Christian Ministries are now employed in fields related to their study (see Findings 1.2).
- Feedback from graduates and industry indicates that the courses have an appropriate mix of theory and practice, and that the courses are delivered in a manner that enables learners to understand and achieve. The quality of the training provided at Alphacrucis Ltd is affirmed by a range of stakeholders who describe the graduates as work-ready, well presented and with well-developed skills and knowledge. Employers and graduates report that the skills and knowledge gained are immediately applicable to the workplace and are valued by both the graduate and employer.
- The EER team found consistent evidence of excellent teaching throughout the organisation. Alphacrucis Ltd has student support structures that are appropriate to the needs of the students and minimise barriers to them achieving their goals. Students are very well supported both pastorally and academically.
- The organisation is well governed and managed, engages well with its communities and industries¹, is providing quality training, and is valued for the positive contribution it makes to those industries and communities.

¹ The PTE uses the term 'industry' to describe its constituency.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

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

The reasons for this include:

- Records and discussions indicate that self-assessment at Alphacrucis Ltd is well embedded and has been practised for several years. Processes to critically analyse contributing factors to student outcomes and other quality improvements are mostly well developed and effective.
- Alphacrucis Ltd has established a highly reflective organisational culture which encourages staff, students, graduates and other stakeholders to put forward ideas for improvement. This information is then systematically used to make organisational improvements as well as to inform course structure, content and delivery which ultimately results in improved outcomes for students.
- All staff are involved in reviewing the purpose and direction of the organisation and how well it is meeting stakeholders' needs. Staff members are well supported by management and have plenty of opportunities for reflection on their role, which ultimately benefits students through improved teaching techniques and student support.
- Alphacrucis Ltd identifies the learning needs of its industries and communities and addresses these needs well through responsive customer service, effective teaching techniques, and appropriate student support.
- Student achievement on every course is scrutinised for each individual's performance and Alphacrucis Ltd has a strong focus on individual student achievement. For instance, Alphacrucis Ltd is able to identify the characteristics of students who are not achieving the qualifications, while identifying ways to bring about improvement to achievement rates for these students in this demographic in the future.
- However, staff had difficulty in providing timely and succinct numerical and trend data for student achievement across the organisation and/or qualifications overall and seem to rely predominantly on the TEC's educational performance indicator data to measure success. Where TEC data is not available, the staff tend to focus on the components of student achievement with the assumption that success will occur as a result. A greater emphasis on wider organisational achievement data will help the organisation to recognise and act on overall organisational performance.

Findings²

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**.

Students at Alphacrucis Ltd are achieving good results as demonstrated by the table below.

Educational performance indicator	2011	2012	2013	2014
Course completion – all learners	59%	73%	85%	82%
Qualification completion – all learners	34%	33%	Not available	Not available
Course completion – Māori learners	-	70%	67%	80%
Course completion – Pasifika learners	-	57%	78%	89%
Course completion – learners < 25 years	-	67%	Not available	75%

Data for 2011-2012 from the TEC; 2013-2014 data provided by the TEO. Table designed by NZQA for illustration purposes.

Both the organisation and its staff have a strong focus on learner achievement but do not set targets or compare benchmarks for student success. Instead they expect that every learner who attends an Alphacrucis Ltd course can succeed, and staff work hard to keep all students focused on completion. However, the lack of numerical analysis means that although staff have a good understanding of the various components of student achievement, and work hard at student success, whether or not students are actually achieving overall is assumed rather than evident.

The strategy for raising Pasifika achievement across the two Alphacrucis organisations is still emerging and yet to be fully implemented or result in sustainable improvements. Given that the Pasifika achievement rate is trending downwards at Alphacrucis International College, this indicates that the above upward trend is probably coincidental rather than the result of an improvement strategy.

² The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

Staff at Alphacrucis Ltd demonstrated a sound understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement, for instance pastoral support, and regularly analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement. The staff have a formal minuted meeting once per month. At these meetings, ideas for improving course delivery and learner achievement are discussed and agreed.

More effective use of the organisation's student management system to provide student performance data that is readily accessible to staff and used continuously would help to systematically inform improvements, for instance to teaching practice and course delivery.

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

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

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

Alphacrucis Ltd delivers outcomes of exceptional value to learners and its industry and community. Learners gain worthwhile skills in the programmes that Alphacrucis Ltd delivers which make them employable in a range of situations. Graduates and employers report that the skills and knowledge gained were immediately applicable to the workplace and are valued by both the graduate and employer. Graduates also report that the programmes are 'transformational' and a life-changing experience. Several graduates spoken to, who were in voluntary or paid employment while studying, commented on the value of the leadership and governance course and how completing it led to immediate and positive changes in their work.

Staff conduct exit interviews with all graduates and know their immediate destination. Engagement with graduates is immediate upon graduation, three months after graduation, and ongoing thereafter. Alphacrucis Ltd also receives extensive feedback from employers about graduates' skills and uses this feedback to make improvements to programmes. For instance, Alphacrucis Ltd has developed a chaplaincy strand within the degree in response to stakeholder feedback.

Learners contribute to the local community during their studies. The internship component at both level 5 and level 6 of the diploma programme involves learners putting theory into practice through paid and/or voluntary chaplaincy work in the communities in which they live. Internships usually involve working in schools, prisons, workplaces, sports teams, hospitals, etc. Feedback from graduates, learners and employers confirms the value placed on the internships.

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

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

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

Significant and meaningful contact with employers and stakeholders contributes to the positive outcomes that Alphacrucis Ltd is achieving. The PTE has multiple processes for gathering feedback and assimilating this feedback into improvements. In order to enhance relationships with stakeholders, Alphacrucis Ltd offers stakeholders and alumni the opportunity to attend special events and teaching days at the PTE and to participate in intensive courses.

The linkages with the Australian parent organisation and the guidance and support offered by the organisation are valuable. Staff have gained value from the participation (via Skype) in events with their Australian colleagues.

Programmes are relevant and reflect changes in subject content, delivery, teaching practice and technologies. Members of the wider church community are regularly used as guest speakers and to critique student work. The PTE has worked hard over time to ensure that the teaching is closely related to the needs of the students. The pathway from certificate to diploma to degree (through Alphacrucis International College) and on to postgraduate study in Australia is a logical progression, and the flexible mix of face-to-face and distance learning suits the needs of learners.

Alphacrucis Ltd seeks feedback from learners through a variety of mechanisms. As well as the formal student feedback process, staff members have an open-door policy and it is clear that students approach them with problems and issues. The class representative system also provides a good mechanism for student feedback. Staff members were able to cite examples of how course content and delivery methodology had been changed as a result of feedback from learners or external stakeholders. Examples are the emphasis on chaplaincy cited earlier in this report and the identification of pastoral and academic support needs for distance learning students.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

There was clear evidence of excellent teaching practice at Alphacrucis Ltd. Staff members are enthusiastic and passionate about their curriculum and teaching and they are well supported by management. Every staff member at Alphacrucis Ltd has a role in student learning and they take a collegial, whole-of-organisation

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approach to ensuring that all students achieve. Teachers and students relate well to each other and students speak highly of the teaching staff. Students enjoy the open, friendly style and have good access to the teaching staff outside of class hours. Students noted that staff members are responsive to the concerns or issues they raised. The strong rapport between students and staff is confirmed from discussions and evaluation survey outcomes.

Alphacrucis Ltd teaching staff are well qualified in their respective disciplines, and all teaching staff hold an appropriate teaching qualification.

There was evidence of the whole organisation purposefully engaging in meaningful discussion about teaching practice and student progress. Teaching staff spoke about how they share ideas, experiences and knowledge through their daily interactions, staff meetings, peer observations and professional development activities. Staff participate via Skype in a monthly colloquium with their Australian counterparts.

All staff members are performance-reviewed formally on an annual basis, but this does not preclude regular and ongoing feedback of a formative nature. The organisation has a formal peer observation procedure in which all the teaching staff participate. In fact, the staff members informally engage in peer observation on an ongoing basis, including being able to remotely observe online teaching by their colleagues. Teaching staff commented on the value of the peer observation process and were able to cite examples of how they had improved teaching delivery as a result. The Alphacrucis Ltd management encourages staff to engage in professional development activities and supports them to do so. Professional development for staff is strategically driven, based on the needs of the organisation identified through feedback and planning. For instance, the lead-up to degree teaching was preceded by an emphasis on staff gaining higher qualifications and a significant lift in their research focus.

Moderation is seen not only as a necessary compliance but also as a tool to enhance quality delivery and assessment. All assessment material is pre-moderated before use. Students reported receiving clear information about assessment tasks and receiving detailed, timely feedback about their learning progress. Students have opportunities for reassessment/resubmission if required.

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 **Excellent**.

Alphacrucis Ltd staff and management are highly student-centred and committed to the success and well-being of the students. The support systems are student-centred and well resourced.

Alphacrucis Ltd has monitored progress and achievement in order to profile students to anticipate which students will need support, what support they will need, and when they will likely need it. This has enabled the PTE to identify potentially at-risk students and to proactively plan and provide support on an individual basis and ensure that it directly contributes to student achievement.

A number of initiatives have been taken to include Tikanga Māori in programmes and more generally in the life of the PTE. These initiatives include a marae visit as part of the student orientation programme, introduction of elements of Tikanga Māori through Moodle online learning, inclusion of a powhiri in the PTE's graduation ceremony, incorporation of elements of Tikanga Māori in specific papers, and the planning of a conference titled Gospel, Māori and Pentecost, which took place in December 2014.

Alphacrucis Ltd is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. The international student strategy has been well thought through, ensuring a measured and carefully managed approach to international education. Alphacrucis Ltd has regularly reviewed its practices to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Code of Practice, and has met compliance requirements with NZQA.

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

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

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

Alphacrucis Ltd has strong leadership and a clear vision and understanding of its business. The organisational strategy is formally documented, and management and staff members have a common understanding of vision and direction. Recent self-assessment documents provide evidence of effective analysis of information from a variety of sources and additional direction for future actions.

Alphacrucis Ltd is very well resourced. The PTE is financially sustainable and operates from an expansive, well-maintained campus which provides a good environment for learning. A library is situated on-campus and houses a valuable collection of resources to support teaching and research.

Alphacrucis Ltd is responsive to changes in the operating environment. For instance, the PTE is actively involved in the NZQA-led Targeted Review of Qualifications.

In partnership with Alphacrucis International College, the PTE has, over time, employed, developed and retained a very competent, well-qualified and dedicated group of staff. Staff said they enjoyed the environment and that they worked hard and felt highly valued. A number have taught at the PTE for a decade or more.

Management was open in their appreciation of the efforts, loyalty and dedication of staff.

The organisation enthusiastically encourages opportunities for reflection on its role and how to better meet stakeholder needs. This has led to a highly reflective environment and culture throughout. Evidence indicates that Alphacrucis management and governance actively seeks feedback from many sources and systematically uses this information as a learning and improvement tool. As previously discussed, better access to and analysis of student achievement data would improve self-assessment capability.

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 **Excellent**.

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 **Excellent**.

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

2.3 Focus area: Diploma in Christian Ministries (Levels 5 and 6)

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Alphacrucis Ltd:

- Improve the accessibility and analysis of achievement data for management and staff.
- Develop and use targets and benchmarks for student achievement.
- Continue development and implementation of strategies to improve the achievement rate of Pasifika students.

Appendix

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/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz

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