



# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Palmerston North School of Design

Date of report: 29 June 2010

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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.*

## Brief description of TEO

Location: Palmerston North

Type: Private training establishment (PTE)

Size: 35 students on average on two programmes:

Design and Computing (Youth Training) and Drawing and Design (Training Opportunities) leading to the achievement of the National Certificate in Design (Level 3)

Drawing and Design - Bridging Course leading to the achievement of the Certificate in Drawing & Design: An Intro to Today's Technology (Level 4)

Sites: As above

Palmerston North School of Design (PNSD) was first registered as a private training establishment with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in 1993, and currently offers Training Opportunities and Youth Training courses which are fully funded through the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The organisation also offers an advanced design course under the Student Achievement Component (SAC) funding rules for fee-paying students who are able to access student loans and allowances through StudyLink.

The most recent quality assurance visit by NZQA was an audit in 2008 and PNSD met most of the requirements for ongoing registration at that time.

# Executive Summary

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Palmerston North School of Design**.

The Palmerston North School of Design (PNSD) is achieving very high rates of course retention, completion, and qualification achievement for its students, with retention rates averaging 85-90 per cent, successful course completion rates ranging between 55 and 70 per cent, and qualification achievement rates of between 40 and 55 per cent. These are significant achievements for these students considering that many have not experienced academic success previously. Based on students' achievements this year, the 2010 qualification achievement rate for the Certificate in Drawing & Design: An Intro to Today's Technology (Level 4) is projected to be closer to 80 per cent. If this is achieved it will be highly commendable.

Students are graded for their achievements against five specific attributes which focus on preparing students to be professional designers. These attributes are: production, design skills, technical skills, application, and professional etiquette or studio practice. Students are consistently rated very highly in these five areas, and this is considered by the students and staff to be a significant contributing factor to their overall success. PNSD provides excellent resources and maintains excellent linkages with other education institutes and design professionals across New Zealand. The owner and manager is active in maintaining close connections with the design sector as well as maintaining his role as an active teacher.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Palmerston North School of Design**.

The Palmerston North School of Design has well-established processes for self-monitoring and building continual improvement into its day-to-day activities. The manager and staff have demonstrated the openness and confidence to invite subject experts to have input into the organisation over a significant period of time, which has added significantly to innovation and improvements.

PNSD's self-assessment practices combine appropriate levels of documentation and informal processes which inform the organisation in considerable depth as to the needs of learners and other stakeholders, how well these needs are met, and where the organisation's strengths and weaknesses lie. All staff are using this information effectively on an ongoing basis for continual improvement.

## TEO response

Palmerston North School of Design 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 PNSD included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

The following programme focus area was included because students from the lower-level programme commonly progress on to this in order to gain entry to design degree programmes, primarily at the local regional polytechnic, UCOL, based in Palmerston North and Wanganui.

- Certificate in Drawing & Design: An Intro to Today's Technology (Level 4).

## 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 **Excellent**.

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

#### **Explanation**

The organisation has been tracking students' educational results since it was registered in 1993. The results reviewed at this evaluation cover the past eight years and show that students' achievement of the Certificate in Drawing & Design (Level 4) has been improving over this time, from approximately 40 to 55 per cent. Course completion rates are higher than for other similar tertiary education organisations as noted in the TEC Progress Monitoring Report (June 2009). This is significant in this context because many students

have no prior experience of academic success. The achievement of the Certificate in Drawing and Design and a suitable design portfolio provides students with the ability to apply to enrol with UCOL (Universal College of Learning) in its design degree programme. Over the last four years, 18 students have progressed on to the Bachelor of Design at UCOL. PNSD has successfully helped approximately 40 per cent of its students progress into employment over the last few years.

Over recent years PNSD has introduced a process to assess students against five specific attributes which focus on preparing students for success in the field of design. These attributes are: production of completed design work, design skills, technical skills, application of design and technical knowledge and skills, and professional etiquette or studio practice. Students are consistently rated very highly in these five areas, and this is considered by the students and staff to be a significant contributing factor to their overall success. The evaluation team observed students at work in the studio space and noted that students were working consistently and productively, actively working together, and well engaged with their study. Students and staff interviewed at this evaluation discussed the high expectations placed on students, and frequently commented on how this had contributed to academic success.

The organisation has well-established practices for tracking, monitoring, and reporting students' achievements and progress. There are regular group and one-to-one meetings between students and teachers to review project completions and the development and use of appropriate design techniques and skills. The three teaching staff and manager meet and discuss students' progress regularly.

PNSD has been working for some time with a specialist in learning recovery and perceptual cognitive processes as a means of advanced learning, from Massey University. This work has informed the development of teaching methodologies at the school which has resulted in improvements in students' achievement and retention.

## 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**.

### **Explanation**

One of the key outcomes that students achieve, apart from a certificate, is the production of a portfolio of work which provides evidence to support applications for employment and when applying for access for higher study, such as enrolling in the Bachelor of Design with UCOL. PNSD has established a memorandum of understanding with UCOL, under which graduates from the Certificate in Drawing & Design (Level 4) programme can apply for cross-credit towards the degree programme. The combination of academic success and the portfolio has successfully helped approximately 16 per cent of students to move into employment directly related to design, and a further 24 per cent to move into employment in other industry sectors.

PNSD has well-established networks within the design sector across New Zealand and maintains effective relationships which provide valuable input to the programme and ensure that students are receiving up-to-date and relevant skills and knowledge.

### 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**.

#### **Explanation**

Students undertake a satisfaction survey at the end of each year, and the results from these consistently show very high levels of satisfaction with the training provided and indicate that their learning needs are being well met. The organisation has successfully integrated literacy, language and numeracy activities into the design programme to assist students with additional learning needs. Teachers were able to relate numerous accounts of students making significant improvement in their communications specifically with the technical language of design, but also in observed communication, both among students and between students and teachers.

The programmes of study have been purposefully developed around design briefs to match the requirements of commercial design studios, and the requirements for the qualifications have been aligned with these projects. As a result, students develop commercial capability through their involvement with commercial projects, as well as meeting the assessment requirements of the National Qualifications Framework.

The ongoing work with the learning specialist has contributed significantly to how well the organisation has matched the needs of its learners, as well as meeting the requirements and needs of tertiary education organisations and employers within the design sector.

### 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**.

#### **Explanation**

As already noted, programmes are based around the completion of design projects, and staff have very high expectations of students performance and output. This methodology has enabled the organisation to personalise projects to best match students' interests. Students and staff interviewed at this evaluation noted this factor as contributing well to students' engagement in the learning, helping students to focus and apply the technical skills learned. A very high level of mutual respect between students and teachers was clearly evident at this evaluation.

Teaching staff and the manager hold highly relevant technical qualifications and experience in a broad range of graphic and fashion design as well as in adult teaching. At this review the evaluation team observed an active community of practice across the staff as they discussed and debated student progress and teaching methods. Staff regularly plan and review their teaching.

The organisation has a well-established staff performance appraisal process involving staff self-appraisal, professional conversations, collegial observations, and student appraisals and input, and staff appraisal is closely linked to professional development. Staff are actively involved in ongoing professional development through visiting experts, internet research, conferences, and formal training.

Assessment and the moderation of assessment are well planned and documented, and appropriate information is provided to students about the nature and timing of assessments. The organisation is assessing at the national standard as determined by NZQA, the standard-setting body for graphics and design.

## 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**.

### **Explanation**

PNSD purposefully places all students within one design space. This includes young people straight from school with little experience of academic success, and older students, some of whom have previously completed undergraduate degrees. Teachers take a facilitator and mentor role with the group, actively encouraging peer support and the generation of creative ideas across the whole group. Students interviewed at the evaluation commented that this was refreshing and stimulating, and they have “made friends with like minds”, where previously they felt on the outside of student groups.

The work that the organisation has been doing with the learning specialist has contributed to developing this environment of inquiry and discovery of learning and constructive criticism, which has contributed significantly to creating a supportive learning environment. This was confirmed through student and staff interviews.

## 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 **Excellent**.

### **Explanation**

PNSD is a small organisation with one owner-manager who is also actively involved on a day-to-day basis with teaching students. PNSD has maintained ongoing contracts with TEC

for the provision of Youth Training and Training Opportunities programmes, and the student achievement component (SAC) funded programme. This arrangement is clearly articulated within the 2009 investment plan developed with TEC, which forms the basis of the organisation's business and strategic planning.

The manager has actively and successfully worked closely with experts in adult education and graphic design to bring fresh ideas to the organisation such as grading students in professional etiquette. This has been a purposeful strategy to help define and clarify what it means to the organisation to be exemplary and at the cutting edge of quality education.

The manager has ensured that the organisation is very well resourced with physical and learning resources appropriate to the number of students. Computer hardware and software is updated and replaced regularly, ensuring students have access to appropriate computer graphics software such as Creative Suite. Students and staff confirmed that they were very satisfied with the resources provided, and the evaluation team noted the availability of texts and other relevant learning resources available within the design space.

Management has also facilitated an organisational culture which stimulates creative thinking and has combined this with an appropriate level of freedom to explore ideas such as bringing commercial projects into the learning environment.

Evaluative self-assessment is well established and purposeful, ongoing, focused on the needs of students and other stakeholders, and has resulted in measurable improvements such as improved course retention and increased qualification achievement and greatly improved student motivation. The organisation has an appropriate management system which has sufficiently detailed policies and procedures to clearly inform day-to-day operations. This is reviewed and updated regularly.

## 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 **Excellent**.

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

### 2.2 Focus area: Certificate in Drawing and Design: An Intro to Today's Technology (Level 4)

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

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

# Actions Required and Recommendations

## Further actions

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

## Recommendations

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

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