

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Palmerston North School of Design

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 15 July 2014

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Final Report

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:	Palmerston North School of Design (PNSD)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 1, 12 The Square, Palmerston North
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	1993
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foundation Skills in Design (Level 2)• Foundation Skills in Graphic Design (Level 2)• Certificate in Drawing and Design: An Introduction to Today's Technology (Level 4)
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 45 International: nil
Number of staff:	Six
Scope of active accreditation:	See: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=942981001
Distinctive characteristics:	PNSD is a small PTE which operates entry-level programmes that provide skills for students to progress to higher levels of study in the various fields of design, or enter the industry as junior designers or assistants.

Recent significant changes: Recently PNSD has sought approval of entry-level programmes to meet Youth Guarantee funding requirements of the funding body, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

Previous quality assurance history: In May 2010 an external evaluation and review (EER) was conducted at PNSD. The results of this was that NZQA was:

- Highly Confident in the educational performance of Palmerston North School of Design
- Highly Confident in the capability in self-assessment of Palmerston North School of Design

There is some variation in PNSD's record with NZQA's Tertiary Assessment and Moderation business unit for the period 2011-2013, with some good results and some areas requiring improvement.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The agreed scope of the EER of PNSD included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management and strategy

The other focus area was:

- All programmes (Foundation Skills in Design (Level 2); Foundation Skills in Graphic Design (Level 2); Certificate in Drawing and Design: An Introduction to Today's Technology (Level 4))

The focus area of all programmes was decided in collaboration with the PTE. The three programmes are taught in an open-plan classroom.

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 carried out by a team of two evaluators who visited the PNSD site in Palmerston North for one and a half days. The evaluation team spoke with the owner, who is also the managing director, the head of school, teaching staff and students. The evaluators also spoke with stakeholders and graduates, both face-to-face and by telephone. Before the EER visit, PNSD supplied the lead evaluator with self-assessment materials and information about the organisation, including developments since the previous EER. This assisted the lead evaluator in developing the scope of this EER. The focus areas were selected in consultation with the director of PNSD.

A range of documents was made available at the EER visit, and these were examined by the evaluators for the purpose of confirming matters discussed as part of the evaluation.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

PNSD shows its commitment to educational performance by:

- Maintaining high student achievement rates consistently above sector medians.
- Providing useful skills and knowledge that enable students to pursue realistic career and employment opportunities.
- Providing programmes for local 'at-risk' youth to provide learning opportunities otherwise denied them.
- Consistently meeting TEC funding targets.
- Providing bridging programmes that prepare learners for higher-level study or employment.
- Providing confidence, self-worth, motivation and work skills to the students.
- Maintaining high rates of student progression to higher-level study.
- Fostering good professional development for the teaching staff.
- Giving the students realistic, industry-based situations, such as a gallery (for display and sale of students' work), community projects and business operations to practise their skills.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

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

PNSD shows its high standard of capability in self-assessment by:

- Maintaining good data collection to understand both individual achievement and cohort performance.
- Analysing and understanding the changing needs of industry.
- Remaining focused on the requirements of universities and technical institutes that take the graduates for further study.
- Maintaining a network of informal links to industry and learning institutes to inform development and improvement.

- Gathering good data from student evaluations of the programmes and the teaching and learning environment, and responding to issues as they arise.

Areas that could be improved are:

- More engagement in formal appraisal of teaching
- Documentation of moderation
- More engagement in the support of Māori and Pasifika students
- The structured use of external advisory sources and analysis of achievement data to inform programme development and improvement.

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 **Good**.

PNSD has consistently enabled most of its learners to complete the qualifications in which they had enrolled. PNSD has met its TEC funding targets, and available data indicate a steady and improving rate of formal learner outcomes since 2007. The published TEC performance information for 2010, 2011 and 2012 shows that PNSD's results are close to the sector median, in terms of programme and qualification completion rates (see Table 1).

	2010	Sector median	2011	Sector median	2012	Sector median	PNSD 3 year average	Sector median
Programme completion	81%	81%	80%	86%	82%	85%	81%	84%
Qualification completion	50%	75%	81%	80%	86%	82%	72%	79%

PNSD in-house data (Table 2) shows the student composition and achievement rates at levels 2 and 4 for 2012. The table highlights the high course completion rates and the favourable rates of progression to higher study.

Composition				Achievement			
	Under 25 years	Pasifika	Māori	Programme completion	Qualification completion	Progression to higher level programmes	Progression to employment
Level 2	92%	5%	24%	95%	Not supplied	60%	23%
Level 4	67%	Nil	21%	83%	86%	70%	30%

Data sourced from the PNSD self-assessment report

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

² <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Learners-Organisations/Learners/performance-in-tertiary-education/Educational-performance-at-individual-tertiary-providers/>

PNSD exceeds the sector medians for student progression to higher-level study and students retained in study. TEC targets for the achievement of unit standards in the foundation programmes are also being consistently met. There were differing opinions about the number of 'drop-outs', but only a few students are dropping out during the bridging programme, and these were for personal reasons. Progression rates of students to higher study and employment are favourable at 80-90 per cent, and all but one student from the level 4 programme went on to enrol in design-oriented higher education at polytechnics, institutes of technology and universities. This indicates that PNSD students are well prepared for further study and have appropriate prerequisite knowledge and skills to study design at a higher level.

Of the small number of students that identify as Māori, achievement was 59 per cent in the level 4 programme in 2012, which represents a small decline over the previous two years. Māori achievement in the level 2 Foundation Skills in Design programme was 67 per cent in 2012, which was an improvement over the previous year. In relation to this, NZQA recognises that where student numbers are small, changes in achievement can markedly affect the figures. There are few Pasifika students at PNSD – they comprised 5 per cent of the student body in 2011, and there were no Pasifika students in 2012. PNSD does not separate out Pasifika student achievement figures.

Much of the data collected at PNSD is for reporting purposes to funding agencies, but students' individual progress is well recorded and the data for cohorts is being collated and studied through year-on-year benchmarking. Management said that external benchmarking with other schools was difficult as not many offered programmes at sub-degree level. Local polytechnics have ceased to offer programmes at the lower levels and now look to PNSD to fill this need.

PNSD conducts exit interviews with its departing students to collect destination data and understands why students drop out without completing their programme. That said, there is room for useful qualitative analysis of outcomes and grades to help recognise and enhance understanding of trends, which would be helpful in developing and improving the programmes.

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 **Excellent**.

The evaluators saw that PNSD has a close and meaningful relationship with the local authority and engages in a number of community projects that provide a useful way of incorporating practical components into the students' training. Such projects allow the students to experience commercial reality and develop interactive

skills with clients. The school's public profile is also enhanced by the exposure that this collaboration brings.

The programmes provided by PNSD provide a worthwhile means to stimulate disaffected youth and give them career direction and motivation. At-risk youth are given purpose, motivation and skills. The student body is predominantly in the 16-24 age group, and the school provides educational opportunities for these young students when they may have achieved little by way of qualifications at secondary school. NCEA credits are part of the foundation programmes as required by the TEC, and these allow the students to complete a secondary school qualification. The programmes also attract a small number of second-chance learners. The students have the ability to staircase from the level 2 programmes to the level 4 certificate programme, and then to higher-level training at polytechnics and universities. The aim is to direct the students towards a career in design.

The students acquire good design skills, industry knowledge and appropriate professional and workplace attitudes. The evaluators heard that the students are 'job-ready in the appropriate setting', such as an internship, after level 4. PNSD produces a careers guidebook to assist students to find direction in their career choices, which is also used as a resource by local secondary schools.

PNSD promotes a family-type atmosphere on its campus and this is enhanced by the open-learning environment. The mingling of different levels of students is beneficial as it breaks the mystique of the higher levels and enables peer support to be established.

As a result of engaging in the programmes, the students noted an increase in their self-confidence, communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and research and problem-solving abilities. The evaluators heard that the stakeholders are generally impressed with the calibre of the graduates.

It is a distinct value that the school has established a street-level gallery to display the students' works and provide a further appreciation of commercial values. The students' project work is sold to the public in the gallery with the student taking a percentage of the sale price. Dealing with clients is a helpful experience for the students. The school conducts peer critique exercises where groups of students evaluate each other's work. This is a valuable exercise as the students learn the value of constructive criticism and to accept the opinions of others.

The PTE gains positive feedback through student evaluations at the end of each programme and when the student leaves the school. The evaluators spoke with a number of stakeholder representatives and the feedback from them was positive. The evaluators saw that local graduates often 'pop-in' and share ideas with current students or discuss university projects with the PNSD tutors.

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**.

PNSD has ensured that its programmes continue to meet the needs of stakeholders, especially the students, in a valuable way. There is a good understanding of student, industry and academic needs, and the programmes are tailored towards these needs. The commitment to the local community is an indication of how PNSD integrates the learning with its desire to maintain good relations with the public, and to show the usefulness of the skills and knowledge that it teaches.

PNSD provides an effective bridging pathway for young at-risk people who lack direction. It has established effective teaching and support methods to motivate reticent learners. Although it mainly targets school leavers, PNSD also supports second-chance learners who meet entry requirements.

Enrolment and induction processes at PNSD are designed to ensure as much as possible that the applicant is suited to the programme and to maximise the success of the student afterwards. Enrolment interviews and applications help to determine students' individual learning and support needs. Applicants may be asked to provide a portfolio to support their application. This allows the staff to make decisions about a student's suitability for the programme. PNSD conducts a trial week with projects and essays to ascertain the student's academic and design capabilities and subject preferences. These strategies are effective in matching students to the programmes and enabling good outcomes.

The PTE puts in place a range of devices designed to emulate the conditions that the students are likely to encounter at university, in order to familiarise the students and maximise their chances of success. Students are accepted very quickly into higher studies programmes at universities and polytechnics after their graduation from PNSD.

PNSD gains an impression of the value of the learning that it provides in a variety of formal and informal ways. It has good knowledge of its graduates' destinations and tracks its graduates as they develop their careers. The management and staff maintain good connections with local polytechnics and universities, which enables them to maintain currency and relevance in the programmes and ensure an effective transfer to higher study. Memoranda of understanding with two prominent tertiary education organisations indicate that PNSD has a desire to enable and maintain these links for the benefit of its students. The PTE makes good use of social media to keep in touch with its students and graduates.

PNSD runs multiple projects simultaneously to meet the students' needs and for best use of the school's physical and teaching resources. Industry feedback has highlighted that graduates have relevant computing skills through the use of digital technology. The research component of the programmes is included to enhance skills and learning and give the students a sense of self-motivation.

Feedback (formal and informal) from a range of stakeholders allows the PTE to gain a good sense of how well student needs are being met. PNSD has a good understanding of the needs of local tertiary design schools and the entry requirements of their programmes. The PTE also has a good understanding of industry changes. Informal links with graduates and employers provide much valuable information about developments in the sector. Speakers are engaged occasionally from industry to give presentations to the 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 **Good**.

The tutors engaged in the programmes are mostly very skilled and experienced. All of the tutors have gained, or are gaining adult education qualifications. The tutors all have the required skills and knowledge in their field. Some of the tutors have been sought by the school for their specific expertise. Not all of the tutors have extensive industry experience, but this does not affect achievement. The programmes comprise a series of projects that incorporate unit standards. The open learning style breaks down traditional barriers between levels and allows for the free interactions of ideas, and for the development of role models.

Feedback to the students about their learning progress is an important priority for the teaching staff. Marking schedules are used which give written feedback to the students, and comprehensive electronic systems are used to track individual student achievement. Careful attention is given to the analysis and collation of student feedback, and the tutors discuss the results and are able to make effective adjustments to the teaching as required. Student feedback is generally very positive. The tutors maintain a collection of project exemplars which help as teaching aids and assist with the marking.

The students interviewed said the tutors are approachable, the morning class meetings are useful, and the open-plan learning is a helpful format.

Assessments are moderated by PNSD as a necessary form of quality assurance. Pre-assessment moderation occurs as expected, but post-assessment moderation occurs relatively informally and there is no documentation of this. Documenting this procedure would help reinforce the responsibilities attached to post-assessment moderation. PNSD is subjected to NZQA tertiary assessment moderation checks

annually, which have identified some issues for the period 2013. The PTE has submitted an action plan to NZQA and is working through this.

One of the teaching staff holds specialist qualifications for literacy and numeracy. She has undergone the specialist training required in this field and, together with other tutors, ensures that literacy and numeracy is embedded in the learning processes. The students are tested at intervals throughout the programme and there was a good understanding of the inconsistencies of this type of testing. There is good understanding of the implementation of literacy and numeracy strategies.

The evaluators noted the use of a variety of other quality-enhancing and self-assessment methodologies used to monitor the standard of teaching at PNSD. These include the use of individual learning plans to monitor individual student progress. The plans are regularly reviewed with the students. Teaching staff are aware of their targets and key performance indicators, which are described in the job description. Performance agreements are monitored by the manager and reviewed annually. There are regular informal observations in the open-plan environment, but there was no evidence that a formalised system of teaching observations is in place.

Staff members have regular Friday meetings at which student progress is discussed. Management recognises that professional development for staff is important, and professional development activities are supported by PNSD. Staff engage in personal research to ensure the learning material remains relevant to industry practice. Other avenues of research include the use of the internet and social media.

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**.

PNSD has very comprehensive and effective support systems to assist the students in their learning. The student handbook has academic rules and regulations which are designed to help the students understand their academic commitments, although some pertinent information such as reassessment rules and the requirements for achieving successful programme completion are not clear.

Some developments have assisted a stronger learning structure, and interactive meetings support at-risk learners. It is creditable that management is working with a university professor in adult education on learning recovery, and bridging the gap between accepting at-risk students and preparing them for higher studies. PNSD is successfully undertaking the challenging task of taking students from the 'at-risk' level to 'university-ready'.

Literacy and numeracy results fluctuate (as they do with other PTEs), but there is good understanding of why this occurs, and generally students improve over time. Literacy and numeracy learning is further supported through regular meetings with students to discuss results and progress as mapped on the individual learning plan.

Management responds to student needs in a timely manner, gaining information on learning requirements from a variety of sources, including student feedback. An example of this is the recent update of computer systems which also enabled an update of design software.

PNSD maintains good industry standards to facilitate the learning processes. The resources are appropriate for the learning and there is a library, design equipment and about 20 computers available. There are sewing machines and tools for the teaching of fashion design and a specialist tutor for this subject.

The evaluators observed ample personal support for the students, and heard that the school focuses on individual student needs; therefore, no specific Māori or Pasifika strategy was needed. Māori and Pasifika achievement rates are currently not very consistent, but the data is distorted by the small number of students in these categories. There are no specific strategies for the support of these groups, and nor is there a formal advisory system to develop such strategies.

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**.

PNSD has some effective governance and management practices for a PTE of this size. The evaluators saw evidence of innovative and enlightened practices which encourage the students to achieve well. The levels of support and standard of teaching are mostly very good, but a few areas could be improved.

PNSD is a small PTE where the owner is the sole director and manager and also engages in some teaching. An arrangement like this sometimes means that most of the initiative is vested in the one person, but the evaluators saw appropriate sharing of responsibilities, especially with the head tutor. The manager is also an ITENZ (PTE association) board member, and is active in the NZQA Targeted Review of Qualifications process and the development of the Ministry of Education creative arts programme. These activities are a strength of the school as they enable the exchange of knowledge and participation in other design and educational bodies.

Management initiatives that enhance and support student learning include:

- Open-plan learning

- A gallery on the main street to display student work
- Encouraging the students to experience commercial realism and public critique
- Recognition of the responsibility to at-risk students
- Recognition of responsibilities to funding agencies
- Advisory contacts in industry and other design schools
- A clear purpose and direction for the school
- Low staff turnover. Staff are happy and engaged
- Support for professional development
- Very strong links to the local community and liaison with local authorities
- Good recording and documentation of student achievement
- A reflective culture.

However, there is no structured system for capturing external advice from stakeholders. The lack of a formal external advisory system may have an impact on programme development as the lack of such a system means there are no formal systems to help inform programme development and improvement.

There are also some gaps in documentation, and the school would benefit from the further formalising of some systems and processes. More analysis and understanding of achievement data to inform development and improvement of programmes may also be beneficial to the learning.

The NZQA EER report of 2010 was complimentary about the processes and procedures of PNSD, and the statements of confidence were favourable. While there were no recommendations from that report, management has acknowledged that there are some gaps in processes that need further work.

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: All programmes (Foundation Skills in Design (Level 2); Foundation Skills in Graphic Design (Level 2); Certificate in Drawing and Design: An Introduction 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 **Good**.

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Palmerston North School of Design:

1. Consider the value of engaging in formal tutor observations to ensure that the standard of teaching is maintained.
2. Implement a system of documentation for post-assessment moderation.
3. Engage in strategies to develop the participation, and improve the achievement rates, of Māori and Pasifika students.
4. Develop a proactive and structured external advisory system to help inform programme development and improvement.
5. Undertake more analysis and understanding of achievement data to inform development and improvement of programmes.

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/>.

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