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External Evaluation and Review Report

ACTS Auckland City Training School
(trading as Equippers College)

Date of report: 15 June 2022

About ACTS Auckland City Training School (trading as Equippers College)

Equippers College (hereafter Equippers) provides Christian ministry training that is closely integrated with the life of a large, multicultural church. Training is based on immersion in the life, vision, values and culture of Equippers Church and is provided to students seeking to move to further their education in a range of sectors, enter employment, or work within the church network.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	13-15 Gladding Place, Manukau, Auckland
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 43; equivalent full-time: 43; Māori: 13; Pasifika: 19 International: five
Number of staff:	2022 full-time: two; part-time: seven
TEO profile:	See ACTS ACTS has no subcontracting arrangements but has an NZQA-approved partnership with Laidlaw College where the PTE trains 40 EFTS ¹ for Laidlaw in the New Zealand Certificate in Christian Ministry – Internship (Level 4) programme.
Last EER outcome:	Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment in 2018
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand Certificate in Christian Ministry (Level 4) with strands in Christian Studies and Internship [Ref: 2772] where ACTS offers two pathways within the Internship strand called Leadership and Worship. These are the largest and most offered programmes at ACTS.

¹ Equivalent full-time students

- International Student Support and Wellbeing. Because the PTE is a signatory to the Code of Practice², a small focus on this will provide an insight into how well Equippers supports its international students and meets the outcomes of the Code.

MoE number: 9513
NZQA reference: C50769
Dates of EER visit: 28 and 29 March 2022

² [The Education \(Pastoral Care for Tertiary and International Learners\) Code of Practice 2021](#)

Summary of Results

Equippers is clearly providing quality education and support to students, and meeting the priority needs of its important stakeholders. The education received is leading to positive outcomes for the graduates that are well utilised in their lives and in employment. The organisation has a strong culture of self-review that is consistent and effective.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Equippers is a well-performing organisation with a clear direction, culture and value and a sense of kinship and connection in a value-based community of learning.
- The college has a relevant and engaged board and an effective leadership team with visible strengths and camaraderie within the management team. The board meets regularly and has a good awareness around what is needed internally and has a wide outreach strategic view.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Students achieve well and gain qualifications that enable theologically based leadership, meeting the priority need of themselves and key stakeholders.
- Programme design and delivery is well matched to all learner needs, and learning environments are tailored to the benefit of learners, contributing to meaningful learning.
- A contract with Laidlaw College to offer the programme works well where the programme offers full immersive learning. The strength of the Laidlaw partnership ensures innovation and changes are made carefully, with a particular awareness around any drift too far from what is approved.
- Highly effective processes and the shared academic services with Laidlaw contribute to valued outcomes whereby graduates leave understanding their identity and from this find study or employment.
- The internship is an 'exemplary model' in process and learning, and a good model for practical and personal growth leading to future work or missions.

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- An authentic learner voice is heard and followed up via many avenues, including an individual development survey and self-review of learner feedback and satisfaction to ensure an ongoing blend of innovation and continuity.
 - Important compliance accountabilities are effectively monitored and managed.
 - A good self-assessment summary allowed the evaluators to understand the organisation well where the collation of valuable feedback and analysis is purposeful and ongoing.
 - Equippers has a strong culture of data collection, feedback and review for analysis which results in changes and updates. This ensures the programmes offered and their delivery and support are relevant to stakeholder and learner needs.

Key evaluation question findings³

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students achieve well, with a 98-99 per cent qualification completion pass rate (although falling to 91 per cent in 2019). This is well above sector average and typically above other providers that Equippers benchmarks against. Priority learners and international students achieve at similar levels to the overall learner population, and this is well monitored and understood by staff and management.</p> <p>Benchmarking⁴ involving the comparison of qualification completions with other faith-based PTEs shows that Equippers is achieving at a high level and indicates that the PTE is performing very well.</p> <p>A tailored interview process ensures learners understand their reasons for enrolling and what they are hoping to achieve. This also enables the level 4 certificate students to decide what path to take within the strand internship: Leadership or Worship. Vulnerable students are well supported to a successful pass.</p> <p>The regional lockdown in 2021 prompted the PTE to introduce a buddy system to support achievement and progression as several Pasifika learners were falling behind. This one-to-one mentoring has helped improve achievement rates.</p> <p>The internship provides learners with hands-on experience to embed their skills and knowledge, and enables them to build relationships and self-awareness, further preparing them well for their contribution to the wider community.</p> <p>Stakeholder and learner feedback demonstrates that the learners are gaining relevant knowledge and skills with good</p>

³ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

⁴ See benchmarking data Appendix 1.

	examples given on how they use their knowledge and soft skills. Examples include self-confidence, running an event, and improved sense of self.
Conclusion:	Learners develop important skills and knowledge to benefit their roles and communities. They achieve qualifications that enable theologically based leadership, which is meeting the priority needs of their churches and the community.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Prospective learners enrol in Equippers via word of mouth for the holistic experience, the development of life skills, development of faith and personhood (self). They also want immersion in a multicultural church context and to complete the level 4 certificate programme for employment.</p> <p>Key stakeholders highly regard the soft skills gained by graduates, such as confidence, awareness of others, critical thinking, social and timekeeping skills. They note that the interns and graduates understand their identity and place and carry Christian culture and values into whatever they do. They also note that the 'skills and graduate outcomes are consistently demonstrated in their leadership roles within the church'.</p> <p>Many graduates go on to employment or further study at a higher level. Various examples were heard of graduates who were undertaking further high-level study and many who were now working at one of the national Equippers churches.</p> <p>Not all graduates progress to working in service to the church. This is intentional as it is the leadership values and life skills in the context of their beliefs that is the main desired outcome.</p> <p>The college has a strongly diverse student body. As a result, the graduates leave with a substantial network of contacts with church partners and stakeholders along with the soft skills and improved wellbeing as a result and a stronger sense of self and growth in confidence.</p>

Conclusion:	Graduates and stakeholders achieve valued outcomes. Value is evident in graduates gaining relevant employment and/or engaging successfully in further study. The internship model of delivery enables students to learn in a real-world environment.
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1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Programmes are relevant and well matched to learners' and stakeholders' needs. Equippers is intentionally focussed on the level 4 certificate programme as an entry-level platform to create graduates ready for future success in ministering, further study or employment.</p> <p>The college meticulously guides the students individually through their learning journey; those who want to can change their stream. Barriers to learning are minimised through improved programme delivery and assessment, feedback and reporting.</p> <p>There is strong engagement at all levels of personal, theoretical and practical learning, with an intentional framing of the programme to ensure learners develop and grow in their commitment to the church values and community.</p> <p>Equippers uses various ways of delivery to suit diverse learners with the base line stretched for all levels of knowledge and a noho marae visit as part of programme to develop cultural competencies.</p> <p>Learning resources, activities and internships are relevant and engaging.</p> <p>Good collation of data helps Equippers to understand achievement trends and use the data to update or change the programme, for example changes to the internship experience as a result of student feedback. The PTE also introduced a dedicated emphasis to biculturalism after a survey reflected bicultural awareness as a 'lowest scoring' area.</p>

	The ongoing review of assessment activity and individual progress gives Equippers a sense of how learners are developing and grasping knowledge. Improvements and changes were made to assessments based on a recent review of moderation trends. As per the contract with Laidlaw, rigorous academic systems are followed, and academic integrity is upheld through the use of plagiarism software and the setting of expectations.
Conclusion:	The design and delivery of the programme has strong engagement at all levels of personal and physical learning. There is a conscious scaffolding of the programme to develop growth in soft skills to meet the needs of the programme philosophy. Self-assessment is used purposefully to review and enhance teaching and learning.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Learners' goals and needs are identified on arrival and monitored regularly; the college guides students individually through their learning journey.</p> <p>An individual development survey and self-review of student feedback and satisfaction are in place to capture the authentic student voice. This is followed up via many avenues to ensure the emerging needs are addressed promptly.</p> <p>The learning environment and the approach to teaching and learning are monitored to ensure the environment is open to different cultural values and meets the needs of young students with an emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultural inclusivity – being guided by in-house staff • meeting the needs of different learning styles • collaborative styles of learning and faith inclusivity. <p>This has included encouraging te reo Māori development, embedding tikanga, and ensuring up-to-date resourcing.</p>

	<p>Pastoral support is ongoing to ensure an understanding of the student holistically and to integrate the learner into a large complex, contemporary, multicultural, value-based community of learning.</p> <p>Equippers College has overall responsibility for the students during their internship placement. One-to-one check-ins assess the needs of students – including learning styles – along with a review of assessment activity. This check of individual progress gives the organisation a sense of how students are developing and grasping knowledge.</p> <p>Equippers ensures the student voice is authentic through robust survey design and enquiry with anonymous student feedback. This is done either through surveys or student representatives. Students have an opportunity to provide feedback at the end of each semester.</p> <p>A survey response about the PTE’s ‘ability to acknowledge bicultural and multicultural contexts’ gained a low rating. This resulted in the recent appointment of a Māori-Pasifika student coordinator to focus on Pasifika expression and a more formal expression of biculturalism within the life and teaching of the college. This has been successful.</p> <p>Equippers has a functional student representative system which feeds into self-assessment activity. Professional counselling is available free to students, and training is offered for the mentors and supervisors.</p> <p>Equippers conducts annual audits of systems of care and conducted an audit for the interim domestic Code, and is ready to implement the new combined Code in 2022. A gap analysis has highlighted that the main area for improvement is around training for staff to recognise and respond to bullying and harassment. NZQA commends Equippers’ action on this.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Ongoing and committed pastoral care, including mentoring, supervising and check-ins, fosters an authentic student voice and promotes academic and social networks while providing a full immersion into the Equipper’s organisation.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Equippers is a value-driven organisation with a deeply engrained organisational purpose and direction. There is a general strength and camaraderie within the management team which reflects the leadership and support given to staff.</p> <p>Board members who are also advisory stakeholders are very active in the life of the college. The reporting to and recommendations from the board occur regularly to ensure relevant and compliant running of the training school. Each year the board reviews its membership to ensure the most appropriate people make up the board.</p> <p>A shared services model with Laidlaw remains a strong partnership and ensures innovation while delivering learning as approved. In the short term, Equippers is considering online approval/accreditation for the internship component to deliver nationwide, and is also exploring other avenues for training.</p> <p>Appropriately qualified and experienced staff keep abreast of the latest innovations in teaching and learning. Staff meetings are held regularly and identify the need for action/follow-up on any self-assessment; individual staff reviews are independently tracked and traced.</p> <p>Equippers offers ample professional development opportunities for staff that align with the organisation's culture and values. Governance training is completed by all board members.</p> <p>Since the last evaluation, Equippers has solidified its self-assessment processes with good data and information across the organisation, where self-assessment is embedded and actions are noted and followed up.</p>
Conclusion:	Equippers has a clear vision, culture and values encompassing a sense of community and connection. It has a full immersive vision and value-based community of learning with a strong culture of self-review of student feedback and satisfaction to determine the balance of innovation and continuity.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Compliance accountabilities are managed well and are supported by the strong partnership with and oversight from Laidlaw College. To check and ensure effective understanding of compliance, Equippers employed an external quality assurance consultant to provide workshops on this subject.</p> <p>Robust internal processes are in place to monitor governance and the Christian Theological and Ministries Education Society's obligations, along with self-review its performance against relevant legislation, such as the Vulnerable Children Act 2014⁵ to ensure requirements are fully met.</p> <p>Regular compliance activities and meetings with internship stakeholders ensure programmes and delivery remain current and relevant. Programmes are delivered to the hours and mode(s) approved by NZQA, and external moderation is completed successfully.</p> <p>Equippers College has overall responsibility for the students during their internship placement and works to meet their health and safety responsibilities. Staff are aware of and ensure they have sufficient enrolment and pastoral care processes for their international students.</p> <p>There is a sufficient self-review process of the Codes of Practice (for both domestic and international students). Equippers recently completed a review of the domestic Code, checking the efficacy of the self-review systems in place to manage the welfare and safety of domestic students, with actions noted as a result.</p> <p>The organisation is working with NZQA alongside Laidlaw regarding a moderation plan that includes the need to ensure assessments align with the graduate profile outcomes.</p> <p>There are no active formal or informal complaints historically or currently.</p>

⁵ [Vulnerable Children Act 2014 No 40 \(as at 1 May 2018\), Public Act Contents – New Zealand Legislation](#)

	A review of international student files by the evaluators showed that relevant documentation is being kept on file as per the international Code of Practice requirements.
Conclusion:	Important compliance accountabilities are effectively monitored and managed. Good internal self-assessment highlights that compliance accountabilities are effectively managed.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Certificate in Christian Ministry (Internship) (Level 4)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Conclusion:	The level 4 certificate programme offers a full immersive vision and value-based programme that fosters a community of learning and outcomes, whereby graduates leave with a strong sense of leadership values and life skills in the context of their beliefs.

2.2 Focus area: International Student Support and Wellbeing

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

Recommendations

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

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

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. These include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review

Appendix 1

Table 1. Benchmarking data

Course completion	2018	2019	2020
ACTS course completion	100%	91%	98%
PTE course completion	79%	80%	79%
Qualification completion	2018	2019	2020
ACTS qualification completion	93%	91%	92%
PTE qualification completion	65%	64%	63%

Students' achievement outcomes are high, including parity for Māori and Pasifika students with course completion and qualification completion rates being above sector averages.

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud⁶*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

⁶ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, training schemes and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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