

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Excel Ministries Charitable Trust
trading as Excel Ministries School of
Performing Arts

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 1 September 2015

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review	4
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results	6
Findings	8
Recommendations	16
Appendix	17

MoE Number: 9531
NZQA Reference: C18749
Dates of EER visit: 16 and 17 June 2015

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:	Excel Ministries Charitable Trust trading as Excel Ministries School of Performing Arts
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	1 May 1994
Location:	20 Portage Road, New Lynn, Auckland
Delivery sites:	As above
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate of Advanced Performance in Dance (Level 4)• Certificate of Advanced Performance in Drama (Level 4)• Certificate of Advanced Performance in Music (Level 4)• Certificate of Performance in Dance (Level 3)• Certificate of Performance in Drama (Level 3)• Certificate of Performance in Music (Level 3)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 98 (38 Māori; 37 Pasifika; 54 per cent female, with 95 per cent under 25 years) International: nil

Number of staff:	Seven full-time equivalents; 17 part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	Excel Ministries has consent to assess the unit standards found at http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=953138001
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Local programmes in performing arts are delivered in a Christian faith-based education environment.</p> <p>Learners are mostly school leavers who enrol with Excel Ministries to gain a skill in an applied learning environment.</p> <p>Second-year students have an opportunity to take part in a 20-week performance tour of secondary school, church and community groups nationally.</p>
Recent significant changes:	None
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>NZQA was Confident in the educational performance and Not Yet Confident in the capability in self-assessment of Excel Ministries at the previous external evaluation and review (EER) conducted in 2013.</p> <p>Excel Ministries has consent to assess NZQA domains and managed unit standards, but is not required to participate in external moderation because it has not reported any NZQA-managed credits in the last five years.</p>

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The EER focused on the mandatory area of governance, management and strategy, and the following two programmes, selected in consultation with the principal and the programme director:

- Certificate of Performance in Dance (Level 3). This programme was chosen because it has the second-highest number of learners enrolled (21).
- Certificate of Performance in Music (Level 3) was selected because it has the highest number of learners enrolled (48).

The Certificate of Performance in Drama (Level 3) and the three level 4 programmes were not selected because there were fewer learners enrolled. Only 11 learners are enrolled in the Certificate of Performance in Drama (Level 3) and 20 in the level 4 programmes.

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 over two days at the organisation's premises by a team of two evaluators. The team spoke to the principal, the programme director, the chairperson of the board, dance, drama and music tutors, students from the first-year dance and music programme, as well as graduates. The team reviewed a range of documents relating to internal moderation, staff performance reviews, strategic planning, analysis of qualification achievement, academic programme reviews, learners attendance monitoring reports, and learner evaluation survey results.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Excel Ministries Charitable Trust trading as Excel Ministries School of Performing Arts**.

Overall, learners who complete a programme of study at Excel Ministries are likely to gain a qualification and pathway into work or study. The PTE has a track record of successful qualification achievement for most of its learners, many of whom come to Excel Ministries straight from secondary schools across the country and with a range of academic abilities. In 2014, Excel Ministries experienced a higher rate of non-completion than previous years as a result of learners withdrawing for personal reasons, which is documented by the management for analysis. Only 63 of the 85 learners enrolled in the PTE in 2014 achieved a qualification (74 per cent). The results also show that 70 per cent of Māori and 68 per cent of Pasifika learners achieved the level 3 certificates, which is lower than the organisation's average overall results.

Learners are improving life skills as well as qualifications. Core Christian beliefs, embedded in the organisational mission statement and activities, contribute to the caring, supportive environment. The PTE monitors the well-being of students and their increased confidence and other life skills, such as presentation and communication, as demonstrated by evidence from one-to-one interviews at enrolment and formal assessment of changes in behavioural attitudes.

Graduates' destinations and feedback indicated that the outcomes are meeting the needs of students. Figures for the 2013 cohorts showed that over 85 per cent gained full-time employment in the sector or went on to enrol in further study. Programmes are designed to provide practical approaches to learning, and the benefits of this is reflected in the feedback from church groups and employers who report that the graduates demonstrate relevant industry skills.

Tutors have industry experience as well as teaching knowledge which is used to help engage the learners in activities. The feedback from learners about the teachers was highly positive. Tutors have the support to deliver theory and practical assessments and ensure that the marking is consistent across cohorts as well as programmes. One particular aspect contributing to the consistency is the use of a panel with an external expert in assessing practical mid- and end-of-year performances, as well as reviewing course materials. Ongoing work with internal moderation among tutors will enhance the robustness of assessment activities.

Learners receive mid-term and end-of-year reports that help them to make improvements to their individual outcomes. The close monitoring of learners' progress contributes to a holistic approach to creating an environment that is supportive and responsive to learners' needs. An example of this support is the

counselling service available to at-risk learners and the additional classes run during the week by tutors to help learners who may be falling behind.

The PTE has a sound system for reviewing board and staff performance, communicating decisions to management, and monitoring outcomes to enhance the programmes to achieve goals.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Excel Ministries Charitable Trust trading as Excel Ministries School of Performing Arts**.

The organisation has accepted all recommendations from the previous EER and has embedded systems to ensure activities will be ongoing to ensure programmes are achieving their aims and are of value. The main areas of improvement noticed by the EER team were in the capturing of graduate details to understand the value of the programme and confirming that needs are being met for learners and the wider community.

A new system was implemented in 2014 to assess at enrolment behavioural attitudes and soft skills for development, which are then monitored throughout the programme. This has enabled staff to identify at-risk learners earlier. In response, the organisation introduced counsellor sessions, appointed a dean of students, and provided additional theory classes, which are showing a positive impact on learners' attitudes and behavioural assessments, as well as improved attendance and lower withdrawal rates.

Excel Ministries' self-assessment encompasses the learner course completion and qualification achievement results, including breakdown of the data by ethnicity and gender, to identify any trends or areas for improvement. This could be enhanced by analysis of average grade achievements for each programme, including the results of strategies to improve achievement for Māori.

Another key area of self-assessment being used to enhance the programmes is using external expert feedback in annual programme reviews to ensure the programmes remain relevant to the industry and meet the needs of learners. For example, all level 3 programmes include a career skills focus as part of the business skills course to help graduates with finding work in the performing arts.

The organisation has a good system for reviewing staff performance, monitoring achievement and working to ensure programmes are meeting the needs of key stakeholders, including funders. Management has demonstrated it has the capability to produce analysis that is meaningful and useful. Further strengthening of the moderation system and analysis of outcomes over time would enhance self-assessment capability.

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**.

The PTE is producing expected qualification outcomes for learners transitioning from secondary schools into a practical learning programme. In addition, there is formal evidence of improved personal well-being and development of personal coping skills, as well as improved employment opportunities.

The breakdown of 2014 results for all first-year dance students (level 3) shows that 79 per cent (25 learners) successfully passed. Māori achievement rates were lower at 67 per cent. Dance learner achievement was lower than previous years because of a higher number of learners who did not complete due to personal factors affecting their focus and commitment. Qualification achievement for first-year music learners (level 3) in 2014 was 63 per cent overall, and 75 per cent for Māori.

Table 1. Dance, Music and Drama programme pass rates, 2014

Learners	2014 Dance (number passed/enrolled) %	2014 Music (number passed/enrolled) %	2014 Drama (number passed/enrolled) %	2014 All Programmes (number passed/enrolled) %
Māori 1 st year	(8/12) 67%	(12/16) 75%	No enrolments	(20/28) 71%
Māori 2 nd year	(7/7) 100%	(1/2) 50%	(1/1) 100%	(4/5) 80%
Pasifika 1 st year	(5/5) 100%	(9/17) 53%	No enrolments	(13/21) 62%
Pasifika 2 nd year	(2/2) 100%	(3/3) 100%	No enrolments	(6/6) 100%
All 1 st year	(7/7) 100%	(32/38) 84%	(5/5) 100%	-
All 2 nd year	(15/22) 68%	(8/9) 89%	(4/4) 100%	All 1 st and 2 nd year (63/85) 74%

2014 pass rates by programme and ethnicity

Although the rates of achievement have declined since 2012, the organisation's data shows that it has higher successful qualification achievement for second-year students (level 4). In addition to analysing overall pass rates, the organisation may

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

see improvements through monitoring grade averages for each course across cohorts to better identify areas learners are struggling with.

Retention for all programmes has previously been around 90 per cent, but the identification of high withdrawals in 2014 has led to a concerted effort by the organisation to develop the personal attributes and study skills of learners to help them with study, as well as providing assistance with transport and accommodation. The organisation also aims to increase the number of learners who move from level 3 certificates to a level 4 certificate programme within the school, but this is hindered by the number of funded places, so only around a third transition. Most first-year graduates (33 per cent in 2014) enrol in higher studies elsewhere. More Pasifika than Māori are likely to enrol in higher education.

The better support systems that have been implemented may improve outcomes for 2015; however, the organisation does not yet have an indication of whether completions will be higher until after the mid-year examinations.

Overall, the organisation has responded well to recommendations from the previous EER, and this is helping to identify areas for improving achievement. For example, retention issues have led to the implementation of a number of strategies to reduce withdrawal rates, as this has an effect on completions (see Findings 1.5 for further information).

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 **Good**.

Destination data is gathered at three and six-monthly intervals following completion of programmes. Overall, there is considerable evidence that the practical programmes are developing life and performing arts skills as well as academic outcomes, enabling learners to pathway to further study or employment.

In 2013, the data from a 50 per cent response rate showed that 49 per cent of those that completed programmes were employed full-time, and 37 per cent went on to enrol in higher levels of study, which meets the goals of the learners, many of whom are recent school leavers, and some are at-risk learners. Graduates tend to find employment as church worship leaders, while others work in the performing arts.

The organisation previously gathered information about graduates' destinations informally, but in 2014 it implemented a systematic review and analysis of the destinations (one of the recommendations from the previous EER) using exit surveys and a six-monthly follow-up survey. In the surveys the graduates rate the usefulness of the skills learnt during the programme, and this is correlated with employer and church group feedback.

The life skills that learners develop include increased confidence in themselves, a goals focus, teamwork and time-keeping. This was evident from the learner evaluations and responses recorded from one-to-one interviews between the learners and the programme director or dean of students.

The engagement with community from the level 4 tour programme of secondary schools is also a benefit to the learners and the community, and the school groups that receive the troupe. This provides an opportunity for secondary school students to see what they can do after college, as well as providing Excel Ministries' learners with practical experience in dance, music and drama performance production.

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 **Good**.

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

Activities are mostly practical, with some theory assignments. In-class theory-based tests are set for half-way through each block, and practical exams are held at mid-year and end-of-year. The practical focus of the programme is well-suited to the level of the qualification and provides experience to take up church leadership positions or small projects that can lead to a career in the industry.

All learners attend compulsory theory classes in the mornings in Business for the Performing Arts, Christian Foundations, Māori Studies and Relationship Studies. In these sessions, learners are taught about the background to Christian ministry in New Zealand, including a focus on how this has affected Māori culture, creating a holistic learning environment where the Christian character of the school and the large number of Māori learners are brought together to help learners develop their personal and career skills.

Each programme has an intake at the beginning of the year so learners can progress along the same pathway. The site is large enough to provide practice rooms and an auditorium as well as theory classes. Each programme is designed to include practical aspects related to each programme. For example, dance students have a fitness session and keep a fitness and diet journal throughout the year. Music learners receive two individual 40-minute practice sessions each week, which was noted as generous in the specialist's report.

Although not part of the first-year programme, learners are attracted to enrol because in the second year (level 4) the school takes a group consisting of dancers, vocalists and actors to tour secondary schools and church groups under guidance of a dedicated tour leader and Excel Ministries staff. For the small number of learners who continue their studies into the second year, the applied learning environment helps learners to develop resilience and understanding of what it is like to tour and perform as a career. This learning experience is often cited as a

reason why graduates from Excel Ministries find work easily. The tour also helps to attract new students from the schools they perform at.

Excel Ministries' review process occurs every two years using external specialists to look at the programme and make recommendations. The programme director and tutors added a business skills paper to the programme, with a focus on skills suited to finding a career in the performing arts, as a result of feedback from the 2014 end-of-year academic review. This has been well-received by learners who said it gave a realistic picture of what they needed to know going into the sector.

The organisation is open to feedback on the programme and invites an external specialist to review and provide a report on each programme as well as feedback from secondary schools. Recommendations are considered and changes are made. For example, the organisation is reviewing the level the dance programme is being taught at and the addition of further resources, including texts and online access. The specialist reports also provide confirmation that the programmes are meeting the needs of the learners in providing a good grounding for them to go on to further study. However, it would be useful to have the specialist reviewer check that the changes made are being applied adequately and make a difference.

Significant changes will occur over the next two years as a result of the Targeted Review of Qualifications. The organisation shows an awareness of the changes and is working with the board and academic review group to ensure it retains the essence of the programme while meeting the newly recognised and registered New Zealand qualifications in performing arts.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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**.

Tutors are well qualified, with current industry experience as well as a teaching background which they use to incorporate the latest techniques and subject matter. There was an obvious rapport between the tutors and the learners the EER team spoke to on site. The feedback from learners was highly positive about the tutors' professional knowledge and the way in which they teach.

The organisation's performance appraisal system is working to monitor tutors' teaching outcomes and areas for professional development and upskilling. For example, tutors who do not have a formal teaching background are supported financially by the school to complete a relevant teaching qualification, and there was other evidence that tutors were supported to attend specialist subject-matter courses for upskilling alongside their involvement in the industry outside of their teaching role.

The classes are taken in a planned, structured environment, which helps support the learning. Learners receive course outlines and sign a form stating what will be

assessed at block tests and mid-year and end-of-year exams, which learners said helped them prepare for assessment. Tutors also review learners' achievement at weekly tutor meetings and provide feedback to learners individually on where they need to apply themselves more, or areas that are working well. Any learners struggling with personal issues are referred to the dean for support and guidance.

Excel Ministries uses a consensus panel made up of at least one external industry expert in the subject area and the head of vocals to assess the mid-year and end-of-year practical performance exams. This is an example of where the organisation uses external input as part of the internal moderation system that enables the programme director to identify any issues with the teaching content or application of marking schedules to check that assessments align to outcomes. The theory assessments are also moderated by the programme director who checks for consistency of grade allocations across subjects and tutors. Where there are any discrepancies with assessments, this is discussed at monthly departmental meetings with the tutors and changes made if required.

A strength of the organisation's moderation system is the external specialist input and programme review that help ensure the practical assessment decisions and materials are at the appropriate standard. The programme director also provides professional development for tutors at twice-yearly sessions held for all full and part-time tutors, with the most recent one being focused on internal moderation. However, some gaps still exist around consistency between tutors in documenting feedback to learners and the application of marking schedules.

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**.

Learners are selected based on their talents presented at auditions held around the country. The panel of selectors is made up of the principal and the heads of each school. Learners are not required to have NCEA but must have some academic history to be able to manage the theory components of the programme.

Excel Ministries takes learners away on camp during the first term for team-building and to enable the learners to develop personally in a supportive environment. Learners spoke positively of the experience and highly recommended it for what they learnt about themselves.

The tracking of results and analysis of attendance and academic outcomes for Māori, Pasifika and New Zealand European learners has identified where better academic and personal support is required. As a result of this analysis, the organisation has implemented a number of changes that are working to increase attendance and reduce withdrawals. These activities include changing the selection process to include more information about whānau background and support. Closer monitoring of attendance using a three-step process has also

Final Report

helped to earlier identify learners who may be struggling academically or have personal problems. The appointment of a dean of students has meant learners can talk to someone other than a tutor about non-academic issues and find relevant support. The dean helps learners find their strengths to work to them and build confidence in themselves.

The organisation has also contracted a counsellor to provide six free sessions to learners referred by the dean. The counselling sessions are already working to provide learners who struggle with the tools to cope better. A suggestion for improvement is using the input from the counselling session to identify other activities that could improve learners' success.

Regular one-to-one meetings with learners help the tutors to identify at-risk learners and refer them to the programme director and dean of students. The programme director and dean have developed a register identifying at-risk learners and have assessed behavioural changes as a result of the support provided. These activities are already having an effect, with at-risk learners moving off the register and overall attendance improving.

Information from exit interviews has also contributed to the understanding of why learners withdraw, and this information has been used to help identify signs of where learners need more support. Support includes assistance with travel and accommodation, additional help classes run by the programme director or tutors for learners struggling with completing assignments, as well as counselling for personal issues.

Overall, Excel Ministries demonstrated that it is responsive to learners' needs and has the capability to identify appropriate support required to help learners to achieve their individual goals.

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**.

The organisation has a clear vision to help young people achieve a career or higher study in performing arts using a practical programme within a Christian faith-based environment. The evidence provided by the PTE showed that it is achieving this vision, although there is room for improvement in pass rates. The PTE was established as a trust in 1994 and has received funding for its programme from the Tertiary Education Commission, as well as financial and infrastructure support from the founding members, who are also board members.

Excel Ministries' board contains members with a mix of skills and backgrounds in the performing arts and business, suitable for setting the strategic direction and planning. The board is currently planning for succession, which has involved using

Final Report

a skills identification assessment to help select candidates with skills outside of their current skill-set, such as networks to develop career pathways for students.

The board and principal make decisions about the programme based on what the current education environment requires, using feedback from industry, graduates and secondary schools. The principal is on the governance group for the Targeted Review of Qualifications, which helps the organisation to understand the technicalities of developing programmes to meet the requirements of the newly recognised and registered qualifications.

There is a high-trust relationship and open communication between the board and the school's principal to carry out the business plans. Ongoing weekly phone calls and monthly informal catch-ups between the board and the principal are key activities for monitoring success toward targets.

New initiatives are documented by the management team in a self-assessment plan reviewed at twice-yearly board meetings. These activities are monitored for effectiveness against qualification achievement targets, along with graduate survey analysis. The results show that the organisation is starting to see improvements as a result of its activities.

Key areas of discussion are focused on learner outcomes as well as programme planning and resourcing. There has been a budget for formal professional development and regular staff performance reviews since the previous EER. The annual camp is also part of the budget. This is an important activity that the organisation provides for all of its learners to support and guide them with teamwork, self-learning and bonding activities away from the campus.

Other changes implemented since the previous EER include tracking graduate destinations, an improved process for following up attendance issues, monitoring of behavioural changes, and the appointment of a dean of students and the programme director in 2014. These changes have contributed to the improved attendance and success of learners. In addition, the head of vocals is also part-time promotion manager, as the board recognises the need to expand its funding base in the future and promote career networks.

The organisation has capable staff and systems in place to make purposeful self-assessment. It needs to ensure it continues to strengthen the usefulness of information gathered from its formal data-gathering processes to identify key areas of concern and follow up accordingly.

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: Certificate of Performance in Dance (Level 3)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Certificate of Performance in Music (Level 3)

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Excel Ministries:

- Monitor cohort grade averages for comparison.
- Continue to include all staff in internal moderation processes to promote consistency in assessment decisions that align with outcomes, including a review of all assessment schedules to clarify grades attributed to each aspect of a performance.
- Ensure that external specialists review the recommendations made in their reports to check that actions taken are appropriate and meet the needs of industry and learners.
- Include counsellor observations in the programme review process.

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

Final Report