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Targeted Evaluation Report

Excel Ministries School of
Performing Arts

Date of report: 23 December 2025

Targeted evaluation of Excel Ministries School of Performing Arts

The limited scope of this targeted evaluation means that it will not result in organisational statements of confidence. Therefore, no EER (external evaluation and review) category status will be assigned.

About Excel Ministries School of Performing Arts

Excel Ministries Charitable Trust is a Christian-based school focused on the development of performance art skills, specifically music and dance. In addition to the Auckland studio, one other satellite site supporting music programme delivery is operating in Taupō. All programmes culminate in a concert performed to the public at various North Island venues.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	20 Portage Road, New Lynn, Auckland
Eligible to enrol international students:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 63 funded EFTS (equivalent full-time students) in 2024. Around 90 per cent of the students are of Pasifika and/or Māori ethnicity. International: none at the time of this evaluation.
Number of staff:	Three full-time, 10 part-time and one contracted tutor
TEO profile:	See: Excel Ministries Charitable Trust
Last EER outcome:	In 2024, NZQA was Confident in Excel Ministries Charitable Trust's educational

performance and Not Yet Confident in the PTE's capability in self-assessment.

Scope of evaluation:

This targeted evaluation considered one focus area:

- Implementation of the post-2024 EER quality improvements. This was largely framed around several factors: Excel's understandings and learnings from the last EER process; Excel's consideration and response to the findings and recommendations within the report; any documented evidence Excel could supply that shows how they have responded; and evidence that there is improvement since the report was published on 22 October 2024.

MoE number:

9531

NZQA reference:

C65330

Date of targeted evaluation:

7 October 2025

Summary of results

Excel has comprehensively responded with improvement actions in response to the last EER. The PTE used the report recommendations from that EER (see Appendix 1) as starting points, but also decided on a range of other self-assessment and improvement actions.

Documentation of self-assessment activities – and more specifically the use of data and external viewpoints to support management decision-making – is now comprehensive. NZQA can now express confidence in the self-assessment of Excel.

Programme review is exemplary. Excel has used comprehensive, wide-ranging, data-rich process for programme review, including a critical external lens. Excel is clearly looking for areas to strengthen and improve, as well as confirming and validating current areas of strength, including student support which was rated as 'Excellent' at the last EER.

Recent stakeholder survey evidence indicates that the school has the recognition, respect and support from aligned faith communities, other education providers, and professionals in dance and music performance fields.

Some key decisions taken towards improvement include:

- Reinstating an academic committee to provide a key forum for academic quality oversight and collective, collegial decision-making around both programme delivery and portfolio development.
- Reinstating a student camp early in the 2025 academic year as a foundational component of onboarding and team building through talanoa¹ and whakawhanaungatanga.²
- Revitalising the programme advisory groups and developing a much-improved stakeholder voice for input into the PTE's programme portfolio.
- Investing in a learning management system, a range of new musical

¹ 'For Pasifika people, talanoa is how we communicate and is key to maintaining respectful relationships. Talanoa is about open and respectful interactions. It includes the sharing of ideas and stories between people. When we talanoa, we connect.' (source [Le Va](#) 2023)

² A process of establishing relationships, relating well to others (source: Te Aka Māori dictionary).

instruments, new Chromebooks for the students, and new audio speakers for better utilisation of the two existing dedicated performance spaces.

- Conducting a particularly comprehensive review of the two satellite programme delivery sites (Palmerston North and Taupō). Excel made decisions about the sites based on a consideration of participation and achievement data, need, as well as vision, values and financial viability. Excel closed the Palmerston North site following this review but confirmed the concept as valuable and one worth taking forward.

Focus areas

Focus area: Implementation of the post-2024 EER quality improvements

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence	
<p>Excel has benefited from continuity of governance and management (and educational staffing) since the 2024 EER. Student enrolments have steadily returned to pre-pandemic numbers which has eased financial pressures. Staffing at the managerial level has decreased with the non-replacement of the proportional, academic director role, which was unfilled at the last EER. At the same time, the heads of department for music and dance have gained another year's experience in the role and have led or participated actively in comprehensive and well-documented programme reviews. Notably, the director of people and culture is now assuming more of the principal's role, allowing the latter to undertake a sabbatical.</p> <p>The school has a diverse staffing profile which aligns well to the student cohort. Teaching staff maintain currency at a high level as both performers/practitioners and as academic professionals. One is close to completing a programme-congruent PhD, and the other a programme-congruent Master's degree. Recruitment and development of staff at Excel is effective and matches if not exceeds the typical career development pattern of other diploma-delivering organisations.</p> <p>There is rich and ongoing stakeholder engagement with the relevant faculties or departments at the University of Auckland, Wintec and School of Audio Engineering (NZ) Limited (SAE). A memorandum of understanding has been developed with SAE, providing credit recognition into SAE's Songwriting degree. There are clear, improving and formalised study pathways for graduates, which a few have taken. Excel hopes to encourage more progression into higher education.</p> <p>Excel students have strong performance skills and readiness for professional levels of practice. Supporting a schedule of touring and live performances continues to be a key feature of the programme design. There also continues to be useful engagement with secondary schools, and outreach to communities in South and West Auckland and Taupō in particular. There is continued evidence of student-facing investment and improvement of facilities, equipment and programmes, and the addition of an on-site counsellor.</p>	

External review is strong. An external review of each of the diploma programmes (dance and music) was conducted by a suitably qualified and current academic and could be benchmarked against typical degree monitoring practices. Data gathering and analysis from a 360-degree student/graduate/industry/church community/schools perspective is strong and well documented and indicates mostly positive responses and perceptions, with clarity around specific areas for improvement.

Programme review is exemplary: comprehensive, wide-ranging data has been used as well as a critical external lens (akin to degree monitoring), and Excel is clearly looking for areas to strengthen and improve, as well as validate current areas of strength. Evidence of intentional, joined up self-assessment includes the improved stakeholder voice through well-facilitated, revitalised programme advisory groups; the use of SWOT³ analyses; and action plans with traceable links to the governance board and business plan and academic committee. Data is used well. This is a major step up since the last EER. That said, these activities may become onerous without a more sustainable cycle of self-assessment, informed by and in synch with the new NZQA iQAF. This will require close attention to NZQA consultation, promulgation and sector group engagement.

As stated earlier, the review of satellite provision of programmes was particularly comprehensive. Excel exited the Palmerston North site following that review. The board believes that the concept has been shown to be viable, the delivery mode is perhaps even better with the increased embedding of the new learning management system, and is something valuable to explore further with aligned faith communities.

Although the board is aware of the Tertiary Education Commission-aligned educational performance indicators, it does not have a strong enough conversation and strategy towards improving student retention and success. This report makes a recommendation along those lines. Similarly, it would be useful to broaden governance attention to staff value, satisfaction and voice moving forward; in particular, it was unclear how the board gains teaching staff perspectives.

³ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

The following two key evaluation questions were also considered as 'in scope', and were rated as below.

Key evaluation question 5: How well does governance and management support learner achievement?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence	
<p>As summarised above, Excel has comprehensively responded to the improvement actions they decided on in response to the last EER. The evidence gathered through self-assessment – including comprehensive feedback on programme relevance and quality – provides a high level of assurance that learner achievement, success and wellbeing is a top-line priority for governance, management and teachers at Excel. Where limitations in programme performance and student achievement are identified, there is clear evidence that the PTE has taken action to make improvements carefully and promptly. This is embedded in the organisation’s policies and practices.</p> <p>That said, based on a general overview of achievement data supplied in the graduate survey synopses and the annual review, course completions overall have declined for a second consecutive year. There is notable attrition at level 4, but better rates of retention and success at level 5. This suggests a shorter level 3 preparatory (60-credit) programme may be needed.</p> <p>Graduate outcomes from the surveys (with relatively limited response rates) are rather average, notwithstanding the typical slow process of gaining traction in the related industries. At face value, the recent sample of graduate outcomes does not align very strongly with the ‘programme promise’ in terms of industry outcomes. That said, as has been noted in evaluations of other creative industries programmes, graduates can validly show flexibility in their desired outcomes. Examples include full-time employment, volunteering, part-time employment and freelancing. Employment outcomes in these fields may not be linear and invariably require resilience and persistence by graduates.</p>	

Key evaluation question 6: How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
<p>Findings and supporting evidence</p> <p>The director/principal has a clear responsibility for maintaining compliance. He uses a combination of analogue ('to-do' lists and Whiteboard-recorded prompts) and digital tools to manage his compliance management responsibilities. He keeps well informed through ITENZ⁴ channels and participation in the Creative Tertiary Educators Alliance. He is maintaining first-line responsibility for compliance during his sabbatical.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All aspects of the PTE have been subject to some degree of review since the 2024 EER. • Programmes are current and have been subject to particularly thorough review. • Statutory declarations for approval of governance board members were received and approved by NZQA. • Excel is assuring the validity of assessments. An external consultancy provided teaching staff with targeted continuing professional development around assessment and moderation. Following on from the findings of the external monitoring of the level 5 Music programme in 2023, all Dance assessments were reviewed and revised to bring them up to an equivalent standard. A table summarising moderation practices and activities was sighted by the evaluators. • The Code of Practice self-review is being conducted appropriately as required by NZQA. At the time of this evaluation, Excel needed to publish Code-related information about students' complaints and any critical incidents at the PTE. 	
<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Compliance management has continued well since the last EER. Further developing a systematic process which can be readily handed over or assumed by another staff member at short notice, may add more surety to existing practices.</p>	

⁴ Independent Tertiary Education New Zealand

Recommendations

Recommendations are not mandatory, but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO).

NZQA recommends that Excel Ministries School of Performing Arts:

- Broaden governance attention to staff value, satisfaction and voice, and consider best ways for candid, ongoing self-assessment of those elements; perhaps consider a staff member attending a segment of the board meeting on rotation.
- Institute a clearer action plan within the template used to record board meetings. Include parameters such as: 'by when'; expected outcome; and verification of intended impacts.
- Strengthen board-level conversation and strategic thinking towards improving student retention and success.
- Consider the possible value of offering a shorter, level 3 preparatory (60-credit) programme which may better suit some new students.

Requirements

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

There are no requirements arising from the evaluation.

Appendix 1

2024 NZQA External Evaluation and Review recommendations to Excel

Recommendations are not mandatory, 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.

NZQA recommends that Excel Ministries Charitable Trust:

- Consider establishing an academic committee for oversight of academic quality; to oversee all aspects of programme development and delivery (including satellite sites), receive reviews and actions plans, and monitor academic compliance.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of all aspects of satellite and dance academy programme delivery.
- Document the analysis of outcomes data and information collected, to ensure the detail, findings and nuances of programmes over time are available to inform review.
- Review the structure of programme reviews to include a range of programme-related information that includes tutor input and student feedback.

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 modified 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 fraud⁵*
- *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.*

⁵ 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 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

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 excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 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, micro-credentials 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 2022. 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/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz