

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Trinity Methodist Theological College

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 28 June 2011

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Location:	202 St Johns Road, Meadowbank, Auckland
Type:	Private Training Establishment
First registered:	1995
Number of students:	Domestic: 48 equivalent full-time students
Number of staff:	Seven full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	Diploma in Practical Theology (Level 6)
Sites:	One
Distinctive characteristics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In most years, over two-thirds of the students on the diploma come from Pasifika backgrounds.• Most of the diploma students are over the age of 40.• Professional affiliations exist with the University of Auckland, the St John the Evangelist Theological College, and the Ecumenical Institute of Theological Distance Studies.• Block courses in the diploma last a week and then students move to parish placements for three weeks during which they complete online work.
Recent significant changes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction of block courses in the diploma.• Move to a web-based learning management system.

- Introduction of new papers and intensives/workshops in Māori and Pasifika studies for the diploma.
- Introduction of the Licentiate of Ministry Studies which is outside the NZQA framework.

Previous quality assurance history:	At the most recent quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in July 2007, Trinity Methodist Theological College (Trinity College) met all requirements.
Other:	Many of the licentiate papers are delivered in Pasifika languages.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

In accordance with NZQA policy, the focus area of governance, management, and strategy is included in the scope. Most of the college's work is connected to the Diploma in Practical Theology, and some changes in delivery are being implemented. As a focus area, therefore, it offers a very good insight into how the institution operates. The diploma is the only NZQA-approved course offered by the college. Full-time students complete 240 credits over two years, and part-time options are available. Currently there are 12 full-time students and three part-time students.

The third focus area is the Licentiate of Ministry Studies which is being offered for the first time this year. Although it is outside the NZQA framework, the licentiate is included in the scope as it is a new development for the college and has the potential to make considerable impact. The licentiate coordinates a number of programmes previously offered by a variety of different organisations within the Methodist Church. It is a part-time study course equivalent to a one-year, full-time study qualification at level 5. Currently there are 142 students (approximately 35 equivalent full-time students) taking one or more papers in the licentiate.

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 external evaluation and review team of a lead evaluator and an external evaluator spent one and a half days at the campus in Auckland. During the visit, the team met with the principal, the college manager, the two other members of the full-time staff, and some of the part-time staff. The evaluation team also met five of the seven members of the Trinity College Council and three key stakeholders in the form of the Tumuaki of Te Taha Māori, the delegate of the general secretary of the Methodist Church, and the legal adviser to the student review panel. A meeting was also held with ten of the diploma students. Phone contact was made with some graduates of the college.

The college supplied the evaluation team with a wide variety of printed material which is made available to students and/or staff for their use. Access was also freely given to any other data required by the evaluation team to validate relevant points.

Trinity Methodist Theological College has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Trinity Methodist Theological College**.

The main programme of Trinity Methodist Theological College (Trinity College) is the Diploma in Practical Theology for which there was a qualification completion rate of 100 per cent in 2009. Excellent achievement rates are also evident in a course completion rate of 89 per cent for the 2010 diploma (an improvement on the 2009 figure of 56%). In 2011, Trinity College introduced the Licentiate of Ministry Studies with the aim of promoting education for both lay and ordained persons. Currently it is too early to be certain about the levels of achievement in the licentiate.

A number of stakeholders, in particular Māori and Pasifika, emphasised how the college is now listening to the Methodist Church and producing outcomes valued by it. The bicultural partnership has strengthened considerably over the last two years and considerable progress has also been made in understanding multicultural environments and producing ministers equipped for them. Many people consider the main task of the college is to produce parish ministers. In this respect, the college can reflect on a record of securing 100 per cent employment for its graduates. The council reinforces the emphasis on keeping all the programmes and activities relevant to community needs by ensuring content based on wider community initiatives, such as primary health care and pastoral care, is included in the diploma and licentiate courses. The needs of learners are further recognised by the college in the form of providing educational pathways.

The college's emphasis on effective teaching is exemplified by the use of a multimedia approach and online curriculum delivery. The parish placements are an important component of the diploma as they reinforce the practical aspects of the programme. The college provides valuable assistance to students who require study skills, ranging from the basics, such as effective writing skills, to the more advanced, such as those required to use Moodle e-learning software and the college's website.

The council and management operate very effectively. The principal's role is pivotal and he is a very good source of advice to the council as well as an agent of change. A clear direction and strategy has been set through a detailed strategic plan. Changes are taking place in society and the college is responding in a positive manner by taking a much wider multicultural approach. The council has also been responsible for a number of other positive changes that have supported educational achievement.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Trinity Methodist Theological College**.

Benchmarking the achievement rates poses challenges as there is a multiplicity of theology qualifications currently available in New Zealand. However, informal benchmarking takes place through links some members of staff have with the University of Auckland. Even though the licentiate has only recently started, the college is already receiving positive feedback from parishes and other stakeholders.

Closer links developed with the Methodist Church community afford Trinity College frequent opportunities to assess the relevance of all its programmes and to receive feedback on the qualities of its students. The college would gain from formalising some of the input of parishioners into assessment of the college's programmes and from gaining more feedback from its graduates about areas for programme development in the years after they have completed their probationer programme. The college already receives a variety of feedback on its courses which it uses to make improvements. A particular example was the introduction of online delivery combined with block courses in the diploma instead of face-to-face course delivery only. The self-assessment taking place of the licentiate courses will be assisted by the data available on enrolment numbers and the further analysis due to take place.

The college uses many indicators of the effectiveness of the diploma teaching sessions including the feedback from the student evaluations of each course. The latter are compulsory and are regarded by the college as integral to the process of continuous improvement. These evaluation forms are also used for the licentiate. The college would benefit from a different type of form with a greater emphasis on qualitative data which could produce more comprehensive information specifically relevant to students.

The college retains such close contact with its diploma students during the course and the probation programme that it has a very good understanding of the effectiveness of the support provided. It can identify those students requiring additional help and has the mechanisms to provide it.

Trinity College has made a number of changes in the last few years, and throughout the process the council has been careful to constantly check progress. The organisation has employed external consultants whenever deemed appropriate and has recently approved an external audit of its educational processes. Feedback is also received from the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church after the college has presented its annual report. Communication with stakeholders is very good, and open channels of communication with the parishes are evident.

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 main programme of Trinity College is the Diploma in Practical Theology, for which in 2009 there was a qualification completion rate of 100 per cent. The diploma is an NZQA-accredited qualification designed to prepare students for ministry. Once they have gained a ministry position, the graduates are involved in a probationer programme for the next two years under the supervision of a parish superintendent.

Excellent achievement rates are also evident in a course completion rate of 89 per cent for the 2010 diploma (an improvement on the 2009 figure of 56%). Benchmarking the achievement rates poses challenges as there is a multiplicity of theology qualifications currently available in New Zealand. Nevertheless, informal benchmarking takes place through links that some members of staff have with the University of Auckland and the St. John the Evangelist Theological College. Trinity College also uses its relationship with the Ecumenical Institute of Distance Theological Studies to benchmark its achievement rates. .

In 2011, Trinity College introduced the Licentiate of Ministry Studies with the aim of promoting education for both lay and ordained persons. Many of the courses in the licentiate were previously offered by a variety of organisations within the Methodist Church. Currently it is too early to be certain about the levels of achievement in the licentiate as it has only been operating for a few months, but there are many positive signs, such as the rise in the number of people attending the courses. Some of these people will be attending purely for interest, so the college is considering a range of ways of measuring achievement levels. Already the college is receiving positive feedback from parishes and other stakeholders about the licentiate.

Management is fully informed of the achievement rates for the diploma and the licentiate and keeps the council well informed. The principal recognises that the students also gain soft skills and study skills which will help them in their studies and when they move into ministry positions. As much of the course takes place online, the students also gain valuable information technology skills. The acquisition of these skills benefits the wider community since ministers interact with a wide range of people. The diploma students also identified a number of ways, such as social and spiritual benefits, in which taking the diploma enriched their lives.

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

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**.

A number of stakeholders, in particular Māori and Pasifika, emphasised how the college is now listening to the Methodist community and producing outcomes valued by it. The change was described by one stakeholder as “the parish being brought into the college”. In the college, the bicultural partnership is embodied in the student review panel which determines the setting of a student’s preparation for ordination. The members of this panel include the Tauwi executive officer and the tumuaki of Te Taha Māori. The bicultural partnership has strengthened considerably over the last two years and has laid the foundation for future growth. More Māori students are taking licentiate courses and are being encouraged to extend this involvement.

The diploma students stressed how the college is helping them gain an understanding of tikanga Māori spiritual perspectives and religious practices. Many students come from Pasifika backgrounds and they explained how they now realise that different cultures have unique approaches to religious experience and practice. Considerable progress has therefore been made in understanding multicultural environments and producing ministers equipped for them. The diploma students also emphasised how the college is providing them with a broad understanding of theology and at the same time is fully preparing them for what they are likely to encounter in their work as ministers. This practical approach ranges from exploring the social issues they are likely to encounter to ways in which they can improve their preaching.

Many people consider the main task of the college is to produce parish ministers. In this respect, the college can reflect on a record of securing 100 per cent employment for its graduates. The positions gained are shown in the annual report to the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church. The report also reveals that over 90 per cent of the college’s graduates stay in their ministry positions for over five years.

The college employs mostly part-time tutors, many of whom are practising ministers. This link with the parishes is supplemented by the parish superintendents involved in the probationer programme. The commendable involvement with these tutors and other people outside the college was aptly described by a part-time tutor as “democratisation of the college”. These types of links afford the college frequent opportunities to assess the relevance of its programmes and to receive feedback on the qualities of its students. However, the college would benefit if it formalised some of the input of parishioners into assessment of the college’s programmes and gained more feedback from its graduates, in the years after they have completed their probationer programme, about the value of the programme and areas for programme development.

One of the main driving forces behind establishing the licentiate was a desire to coordinate a diverse range of programmes previously offered by a variety of organisations. Although this has been achieved, there can be less certainty at this early stage of the programme’s development about the extent of the achievement of other intended outcomes, such as a

growth in the number of lay preachers and lay leaders in the church. Anecdotal tracking is taking place at the moment and more formal systems for measuring the achievement of outcomes are being established.

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 **Good**.

The college has made valuable progress in this area over the last few years. The needs of Māori and Pasifika people have been recognised, the students have responded accordingly, and there are now waiting lists for some courses. The particular needs of individual students are identified in meetings with the student review panel at the beginning of the diploma programme. The council reinforces the emphasis on keeping all the programmes and activities relevant to community needs. The licentiate provides a plethora of opportunities to meet such needs as the courses are frequently initiated by local communities. Some courses are delivered and assessed in Pasifika languages, while other courses are based on the requirements of different branches of the Methodist Church.

At the same time as satisfying these needs, the college could extend a more standardised approach across multilingual environments such as meeting the need for more consistency in the work of lay preachers. The licentiate has the potential to meet the Church's need for more worship leaders. All the programmes are overseen by a curriculum review panel which meets four times a year. Curriculum oversight involves all the academic staff, providing an opportunity for course development based on feedback from a variety of sources.

The council supports the inclusion in the licentiate courses of content based on wider community initiatives, such as primary health care and pastoral care. The need for a higher awareness of social issues is also recognised in the diploma course. This is now bearing fruit in the form of approximately 70 per cent of ministers ordained during the last three years accessing the work of the Methodist Mission, the church's social services arm, compared with approximately 30 per cent of those ordained over five years ago.

The students for the diploma are selected by the church rather than the college. Involving the college principal in the selection process could be advantageous as he has an excellent understanding of the needs of the different stakeholders. The needs of learners are further recognised by the college in the form of providing educational pathways. The licentiate is viewed by the principal as a stepping stone for Māori and Pasifika to become candidates for ministry. The standards in the licentiate are maintained to the same level as the diploma standards so that students using the licentiate as a stepping stone to another course can gain recognition of prior learning. Similarly, students who have completed the diploma and probation programmes are encouraged to undertake the Master of Ministry programme run by the University of Otago or an equivalent programme.

The college receives a variety of feedback from its courses which it uses to make improvements. A particular example of this was the introduction of online delivery combined with block courses in the diploma instead of face-to-face course delivery only. These changes are appreciated by the students as they make it easier for them to stay in their local areas. Feedback could be strengthened by gaining more input from graduates who are practising ministers. The assessment of the licentiate courses will be assisted by the data available on enrolment numbers and the further analysis due to take place.

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 council, and particularly the principal, are heavily involved in ensuring that the students are making satisfactory progress in the diploma. Formative assessment, for example, takes place through glossary items, halfway quizzes, chatrooms, and discussions between students and tutors. Great emphasis is placed on a high level of learner engagement through online resourcing and practical activities. The move to a web-based learning management system is commendable. It allows blended learning opportunities, additional resourcing, and the development of a range of assessment techniques to suit a variety of learning styles. The assessments provide an opportunity for feedback to the students from the staff which is given in written form.

The standard of teaching in the diploma is enhanced by the use of an excellent handbook for the tutors covering topics such as multimedia presentations and key learning objectives. The college's attitude to such topics is exemplified by the following statement from the handbook: "When learning needs and styles are taken into account, it is vital that all tutors begin to work in a way using a multi-media approach so as to advantage all learners". This statement is unequivocal and provides a clear direction and emphasis on the learners. The tutors are also instructed in the use of Moodle online software. Team teaching is used, with the position of lead teacher being usually filled by a practising minister. The college promotes innovative teaching such as the use of Connect meeting rooms with a chat pod capability so that students can ask questions online as tutors present material. Teaching is further enhanced by the use of an annual peer review system.

The college uses many indicators of the effectiveness of the diploma teaching sessions, including the numbers of students accessing resources, the increase in complexity of the conversations in lessons, the gain in the understanding of the connection between the laity and ordained ministers, and the feedback from the student evaluations of each course. The latter are compulsory and are regarded by the college as integral to the process of continuous improvement. These evaluation forms are also used in the licentiate. As with the diploma, the data from the licentiate course evaluation forms is collated and a summary is given to the principal who discusses the results with the tutors. Most of the student feedback seen by the evaluation team was very positive. However, rather limited parameters were included and quantitative measures dominated. The college would benefit from a different type of form with a greater emphasis on qualitative data which could

produce more comprehensive information specifically relevant to students. Nevertheless, the feedback can lead to changes such as the occasion when negative feedback about a particular tutor led to an increased use of team teaching to reduce that tutor's impact.

The parish placements are an important component of the diploma as they reinforce the practical aspects of the programme. Emphasis is placed on the students becoming fully involved in all aspects of the community, and the college has observed the growth in relationship skills and community awareness among the students. The college is to be commended for its approach to providing effective ministers. It continues this approach during the probation programme. Feedback is obtained by the college on parish practice, and ideas for ways of adapting college courses are gained during a regular retreat held for probationers.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

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

Trinity College is a very student-centred body. It exemplifies this with an impressive array of ways of supporting students, overseen by the student review panel which monitors the students' welfare and progress continuously. A student summarised this as the college putting "everything in place for you not to fail". The college recognises that many of the students require study skills ranging from the basics, such as effective writing skills, to the more advanced, such as those required to use Moodle and the college's website. The technology needed to access some of the material is made available by the provision of laptops to the diploma students. These enable the students to access other forms of support, such as the online chatrooms, which they said they find valuable.

The students appreciate the personal assistance from their tutors and access to the library and a spiritual chaplain during the block courses. Such support is continued when the students are undertaking their parish placements. The sermons given by the students, for example, are critiqued by groups of parishioners so that the students can continue to improve. The probation coordinators continue to support the students during the two years of this programme.

This impressive network of support is driven by the council and particularly the principal, who is readily available to the students. The education pathways that have been established have already been described and form an additional type of support.

The college retains such close contact with its diploma students during the course and the probation programme that it has a very good understanding of the effectiveness of the support provided. It can identify those students requiring additional help and has the mechanisms to provide it. Diploma students praised the open style of management at the college and felt confident that complaints were dealt with effectively. This openness also allows management to keep checking that students feel supported and that they are receiving the guidance they require.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

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

The council and the management operate very effectively. The principal's role is pivotal and he is a very good source of advice to the council as well as an agent of change. A clear direction and strategy has been set through a detailed strategic plan. This plan is currently in the process of being reviewed to include the period from 2011 to 2016 and beyond. A strategic planning day was held in March 2011 and key stakeholders were asked to make a presentation about "their dreams for Trinity College". A wider range of stakeholder groups was also asked for written feedback on the college's strategic vision. This process not only demonstrates the college's open leadership style but also provides another opportunity for the council to assess its strategies.

The council emphasised to the evaluation team that the college is preparing people for global leadership. A key stakeholder likened it to moving away from "teaching in a box" to "breaking the walls down" in order to include a broader perspective. This illustrates the proactive stance being taken by the college and its governing body. Changes are taking place in society, and the college is responding in a positive manner and taking a much wider multicultural approach. Efforts are being made to create partnerships with other Pasifika theological colleges and field trips are being provided for staff, such as a recent one to Northland to deepen understanding of Māori issues.

The council has also been responsible for a number of other positive changes which have supported educational achievement. These have included the appointment of probation coordinators, the freeing of funds tied up in college housing, and the purchase of personal laptop computers for students. The students recognise the generous resourcing. Staff members also recognise the support they are receiving in the form of finance and time for professional development. They feel appreciated by the college and are keen to be involved in its work.

The willingness to look at the big picture has not meant a reluctance to deal with day-to-day issues. The complaints procedure is regarded as effective, with particularly robust systems being available for serious issues. The evaluation team received feedback attesting to the transparency of the college's operations. Systems were also seen by the team to be in place for the appraisal of the principal and other members of staff.

The council is highly supportive of the licentiate and at least two of its members have enrolled in some of its courses. The qualification itself is seen as a way of making the courses more accountable to the church and the college. This assists in the benchmarking of some licentiate courses as the diploma courses can be used for comparison purposes.

Throughout this process of change, the council has been careful to constantly check progress. It has employed external consultants where deemed appropriate and has recently approved an external audit of its educational processes. The council models good practice through the self-evaluations undertaken by each member on an annual basis. Feedback is also received from the annual conference after the college has presented its annual report.

Communication with stakeholders is very good and open channels of communication with the parishes are evident.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: Diploma in Practical Theology (Level 6)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Licentiate of Ministry Studies

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

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

This is a part-time study course being offered for the first time this year. As it had only been operating for less than three months at the time of the EER, there are some areas where insufficient evidence is available at this stage. However, the college has put a lot of thought into the programme and its planning has been very thorough. It is already assessing how the licentiate is progressing, as detailed in the answers to the key evaluation questions.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those implied or expressed within the report.

Further actions

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

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring all non-university TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

*Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication *Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review*, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>*

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