

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Acupuncture Associates Limited
trading as New Zealand School of
Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese
Medicine

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 27 September 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. NZSATCM in context

Location:	Level 10, Willbank House, 57 Willis Street, Wellington
Type:	Private Training Establishment
First registered:	1994
Number of students:	Domestic: 88 equivalent full-time students International: five equivalent full-time students
Number of staff:	16 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Four-year Bachelor of Health Sciences (Acupuncture)• Three-year Diploma of Chinese Herbal Medicine• Two-year Diploma of Tuina• Two-year Diploma of Qigong• 26-week Certificate of Midwifery Acupuncture (Obstetrics)
Sites:	Manukau Road, Auckland
Recent significant changes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relocating the Auckland campus in February 2011 to share premises and facilities with NZ College of Massage• Refitting the Wellington campus in February 2011 to accommodate NZ College of Massage
Previous quality assurance history:	At the previous quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in July 2007, New Zealand School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (NZSATCM) did not

meet all requirements of QA Standard One, the quality standard then in force. The requirements not met related to: governance and management (reporting forms not submitted to NZQA on time); learner information, entry and support (international student requirements); and notification and reporting on learner achievement.

There have also been two degree monitoring reports. The February 2010 report made six recommendations. The 2011 report noted that these had been addressed and recommended a transfer to self-monitoring by Annual Programme Evaluation Report.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected for this EER were:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support including international students
- Bachelor of Health Sciences (Acupuncture).

Governance, management, and strategy and the support of international students are mandatory focus areas. The Bachelor of Health Sciences (Acupuncture) is NZSATCM's major programme, attracting the majority of students, and the other diplomas offered are studied in conjunction with this degree.

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 EER team comprised two NZQA lead evaluators. The team visited the Wellington site and the Auckland campus for one day each. One of the evaluators revisited the Wellington site to check on Code of Practice matters. Over these days the team met with the chief executive officer, three directors of the board, two heads of department, two programme coordinators, six teachers, and 14 students and reviewed a range of the organisation's documents and records.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Acupuncture Associates Limited trading as New Zealand School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine**.

NZSATCM collects high-quality data and information from regular assessments, student evaluations, and staff meetings. Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) figures show that in 2010, 87 per cent of courses were completed, 100 per cent of the students completed a qualification, and 83 per cent were retained in study. These are substantially above the sub-sector medians. The 2009 figures are 85, 100, and 84 per cent respectively, so the outcomes are consistent. NZSATCM also records and tracks this performance data.

The key reasons for high confidence in NZSATCM's educational performance are:

- The four-year Bachelor's course produces practitioners who can immediately treat patients and run a practice without further probationary time.
- Graduates qualify for registration with the New Zealand Register of Acupuncturists (NZRA).
- Graduates of this practical degree gain employment and contribute to the well-being of individuals and communities.
- Classes are small, and teachers and learners relate well to one another.
- The school's teaching culture is predicated on "constructive alignment" which is a process of empowering students to construct their own knowledge framework, with the teacher facilitating the learning by aligning activities and assessments.

The school has built and maintains its current standards of teaching and achievement in acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine and is producing graduates who are ready for employment. This is contributing to building a community of practitioners.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Acupuncture Associates Limited trading as New Zealand School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine**.

NZSATCM has engaged with self-assessment processes by:

- having an NZQA quality development advisor involved in a professional development session in September 2010
- having two staff attend Otago Polytechnic's self-assessment conference in Dunedin, December 2010

- setting up a new organisational structure of four sub-committees reporting to the academic committee.

The organisation has embraced self-assessment, and information gathered is analysed accurately and reflected on by staff and management in the search for improvements. Examples of changes made as a result of analysis of information include developing systems of maintaining contact with graduates, including sending out regular newsletters and holding regular professional development workshops for staff. Improvements resulting from self-assessment include:

- The introduction of a more formal governance and management system
- Professional development workshops
- Improving the use of online instruction
- Taking a fresh approach to course assessments
- Seeking to maintaining contact with graduates, including through newsletters
- Setting up a mentoring scheme for students with NZRA
- Establishing links with three traditional Chinese medicine universities in China.

The degree monitoring reports have also contained recommendations which have triggered self-assessment processes.

NZSATCM has a wide-ranging self-assessment system in place and uses accurate and robust data and information. While the value of some of these improvements is yet to be observed and measured, the school's self-assessment is purposeful and genuine.

TEO response

Acupuncture Associates Limited trading as New Zealand School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine has confirmed the accuracy of this report.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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 at NZSATCM complete formal qualifications. TEC figures show that in 2010, 87 per cent of courses were completed, 100 per cent of the students completed a qualification, and 83 per cent were retained in study. These rates are substantially above the PTE sub-sector medians. The 2009 figures are 85, 100, and 84 per cent respectively, so these are consistent outcomes. Learners completing the two and three-year diplomas in parallel with their degree studies contribute to the high number of students completing qualifications. These are very good results.

All graduates of the NZSATCM Bachelor of Health Sciences appear to gain employment within a reasonable time and contribute to their local communities. This four-year course aims to produce practitioners who can immediately treat patients and run a practice without further probationary time. They are qualified to be on the NZRA. Some graduates who travel overseas may have to pass additional local registration tests before they can practise. Graduates of this practical degree gain employment and contribute to the well-being of individuals and communities.

Learners at NZASTCM improve their well-being and enhance their abilities and attributes. There was evidence from evaluations and interviews that learners had gained life skills, improved their own health, and developed self-management skills and motivation in meeting the challenges and demands of the courses. These are positive and important outcomes that go beyond the specific context of the courses.

Although there is good evidence of effective self-assessment of learner achievement, individual tutors' self-assessment in this area is somewhat informal and ad-hoc. Better use of a document management system between the sites may bring the benefits of individual tutors' self-assessment to the organisation as a whole.

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**.

As described above, the Bachelor programme enables graduates to qualify for registration and immediately start employment, either in their own practice or by joining an established practice. This qualification for employment is of great value to the learners.

The degree programme is very practical as students acquire their own patients for clinical work in years three and four and all the tutors have practical clinical experience. Many of the tutors are part-time, continuing to run their own practice in parallel with their tutoring. They bring up-to-date practice to the classroom, providing learnings for other tutors at the school. There was evidence from staff and learners that skills and confidence gained contribute to preparation for running a business and working at a professional level.

The school is working towards a new medical model for New Zealand which integrates the best of Western medicine with traditional Chinese medicine. Management has met with the Ministry of Health. Acupuncture is recognised by ACC for rehabilitation treatments. Staff and graduates work with local district health boards, for example offering acupuncture treatment in association with traditional maternity care. This work has value for individual patients and for providing appropriate and relevant care in a multicultural society.

NZASTCM has always had a close association with NZRA. It has set up a mentoring scheme for students with NZRA, and informally through the register and from emails from graduates, NZSATCM staff know where their graduates are working. Staff are aware that more systematic, long-term collection of output data would contribute to their self-assessment and they are taking steps, such as setting up Facebook pages and sending out newsletters, to gather better information. They are also involved with NZRA in studies to measure the uptake of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine in the community.

Research outputs are reasonable given the small number of full-time staff. The staff involved in research are enrolled as postgraduate students in overseas universities. Management was confident that the skills and knowledge the staff obtained would be brought back to the college to enhance learning and assist internal research development.

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**.

Programmes at NZSATCM maintain their relevance to stakeholders and communities. The concept of the school arose from a vision to standardise the teaching of acupuncture so that only those who met the standards could practise in New Zealand. The development of the degree was a natural progression from this to maintain the credibility of the training. The school has established an external advisory which meets six-monthly. There was evidence

from the learners and the part-time staff that the teaching reflects current practice and research. Learners are engaged because the continuing relevance of their study is clear to them.

Programmes at NZSATCM reflect changes in resources, teaching practice, and technologies. For example, in an effort to meet the needs of students NZSATCM introduced online teaching of first-year courses. As a result of student feedback and assessment of results, this has been discontinued and online instruction is now used only for the fourth-year ethics paper. Feedback from students and staff indicates that this is working, although there are concerns about the expense of developing online resources for a small number of students.

The clinical practice component of the degree matches the needs of learners and patients. There was evidence from the staff and students interviewed that this practical work was of great value. Students have to find 24 patients to work with in their third and fourth year studies. Although they find this hard, they learn important skills they will need when they start their own practice. There is also formal feedback from the patients which informs self-assessment for the learners and the school. This practical training develops the learners' cognitive abilities as well as their content knowledge.

The school also matches needs with well-planned learning environments and robust recognition of prior learning procedures.

Assessment of needs is generally strong, but some of the instruments, such as the external advisory committee, are relatively new and will need further development in order for self-assessment in this area to be considered excellent.

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**.

Teachers and learners at NZSATCM relate effectively to one another. Classes are small and there was evidence from evaluations and from the staff interviewed that learners collaborated well and individual needs and learning styles are taken into account, improving academic progress. There was appropriate and timely direct feedback on learners' progress. NZSATCM uses the term "constructive alignment" to describe the process of empowering students to construct their own knowledge framework, with the teacher facilitating the learning by aligning activities and assessments. This concept and the positive relationships between teachers and learners and among learners encourage engagement with learning.

The practical clinical activities are very effective in engaging learners and giving them the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills. Students conduct a diagnosis which they then discuss with a supervising tutor. The resulting treatment is informed by feedback from the tutor and the patient. This practice-based teaching promotes integrated and relevant learning and provides the learners with the practical experience they need to become qualified.

NZSATCM drives achievement by having frequent assessment of student progress. Initially, assessments were held every two weeks, but in response to concerns raised by students, the number of assessments and their timing were discussed at staff professional development meetings and a more appropriate regime put in place. NZSATCM convenes two-day staff development meetings every six months in Wellington and Auckland and uses its own staff and visiting speakers to address issues. These pragmatic discussions of pedagogy and procedures are valued by staff.

Staff who do not have teaching qualifications are working through the Diploma in Adult Education (level 6) and there is a programme of observation of teaching by management and peers, with immediate feedback being provided. Internal moderation occurs regularly between staff at the Wellington and Auckland sites and the degree monitor's report of February 2011 notes that there is evidence of robust internal and external moderation procedures.

Although there is good evidence of effective self-assessment of teaching, individual tutors' self-assessment in this area is somewhat informal and ad-hoc. More formal assessment by heads of department and better use of a document management system between the sites may bring the benefits of individual tutors' effective teaching practices to the organisation as a whole.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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 **Adequate**.

Comprehensive and timely study information is provided to learners at NZSATCM. There was evidence from the students interviewed that they had good information from the school's website and brochures before enrolling and a thorough induction supplementing the student handbook. There was good communication between students at different stages of the degree, so that those in years one and two (the theory years) had a good grasp of the challenges ahead of them in the clinical training years. The only complaint aired was about the steep increase in the cost of the ethics course when it was changed to an online course. However, in general the students get the timely and accurate advice they need to improve their chances of completing their studies.

Continued support is provided to assist learners to pursue their chosen pathways. Both campuses of NZSATCM have a culture of caring and this has been strengthened by the appointment of staff with pastoral care responsibilities. The degree monitor recommended the establishment of an external pathway for pastoral care and the school is exploring the best way of doing this. This ongoing support makes it more likely that students will complete their courses.

NZSATCM provides many pathways for students to suggest improvements, and responses to the well-being needs of learners are appropriate. Course evaluations by students include responses to questions about guidance and support. There are complaints boxes at both campuses. There have been about 50 suggestions in the Auckland box this year. Since the

Auckland site opened only in February 2011, many of the suggestions are practical ones, such as requesting adjustable chairs for the computer stations. Staff and students interviewed were happy with the speed with which these needs were met, while recognising budget constraints. This concern for student well-being impacts favourably on student engagement and achievement.

The two international students interviewed felt well supported and cared for. One of the tutors is available to give them supplementary teaching in their first language. Unfortunately, not all the documents required by the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students were maintained in the files of the five students and it appeared that four of them had no insurance cover for some months. This was rectified at the time of this evaluation and they now have satisfactory medical and travel insurance cover.

While there is good evidence of effective self-assessment of student guidance and support, the failure to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students is a significant gap. These students were not supported appropriately and the present system did not detect this.

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

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 purpose and direction of NZSATCM is clear. Purposes relating to leading the field in education and training in acupuncture and TCM in NZ, maintaining high standards of knowledge and skill for registered acupuncturists, encouraging the wider use of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine, and working towards an integrated medical model were articulated by staff and students alike. The governance and management teams have been restructured since 2009 with the appointment of an independent chairman of the board and a new chief executive officer. Meeting minutes show that the distinction between governance and management is observed well. A good example of effective strategy was the decision to share premises in Auckland and Wellington with the School of Massage. This has enabled both schools to have high quality premises and to benefit from shared libraries and the interaction between students.

Another example was undertaking a trip to China. This enabled the establishment of links with three traditional Chinese medicine universities in China. The school has also participated in meetings with the visiting Chinese minister of health.

The new chief executive has introduced an organisational structure, including heads of department with clear roles in the management of programmes and the professional development of staff. This clear purpose and direction has focussed decision-making and improved the effectiveness of the organisation.

Leadership is effective at NZSATCM. Feedback from the board, management, and tutors provides evidence of all being involved in self-assessment discussions to provide the

information and data needed to make the best decisions at all levels. The good communication and cooperation observed was strong evidence of effective leadership.

The resources allocated to support learning and teaching are generally very good. The clinical rooms in the new Auckland campus are particularly noteworthy. The only negative was the difficulty involved in sharing electronic files between staff and sites. Staff did not use the school document management system, keeping their information in their own computers. They agreed that this defeated the purpose of the school system and made it difficult to share information between the two campuses as well as between management and staff. Finding agreement on a new IT system when staff have loyalties to different computer architectures is not yet resolved.

The recruitment and development of staff is effective and staff are valued. The evaluators were impressed by the longevity of tenure of most staff, the enthusiasm of all for guiding students, and their description of the school as a good place to work. The new chief executive has established clear job descriptions, progressed pay reviews, and formalised contracts for part-time staff, and staff were happy with these improvements. Staff are likely to be more committed and effective as a result.

NZSATCM has engaged constructively with the TEC on resolving issues related to funding and student numbers.

Focus Areas

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: International student support

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Bachelor of Health Sciences (Acupuncture)

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

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

Recommendations

In addition to those recommendations implied or expressed within the report, NZQA recommends that NZSATCM puts processes in place to measure the effects and value of the changes being made as a result of its self-assessment system.

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 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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