

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Network for Fitness Professionals Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 21 August 2013

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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

Name of TEO:	Network for Fitness Professionals Limited (Netfit)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Sultan St, Ellerslie, Auckland
Delivery sites:	Netfit head office and training centre as above. Occasional labs and workshops delivered in regional locations throughout New Zealand as demand dictates.
First registered:	31 October 1995
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Certificate in Fitness (Foundation Skills) (Level 2)• National Certificate in Fitness (Exercise Consultant) (Level 3)• Group Fitness Instructor• Advanced Personal Trainer• Pilates Instructor• Community Coaching
Code of Practice signatory?	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 163 (44 per cent Māori/Pasifika) International: nil
Number of staff:	Two full-time plus up to eight part-time
Scope of active	A range of sub-fields and domains in Fitness,

accreditation:	Sport and Recreation up to level 5
Distinctive characteristics:	Netfit is a small niche provider of fitness education designed to equip students with the essential skills for employment or further study in the fitness industry. Several of Netfit's programmes, including the National Certificate in Fitness, are delivered in a blended mode which includes a mix of paper-based distance delivery, online delivery and assessment, workplace support and assessment, and face-to-face workshops and labs.
Recent significant changes:	The organisation's academic director resigned her position recently because of family bereavement and existing staff have picked up the role between them.
Previous quality assurance history:	Netfit has a good history of compliance with NZQA requirements. At the last quality assurance visit by NZQA, in 2009, the organisation met all requirements.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review consisted of the mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management and strategy

In addition, the following focus area was selected:

- National Certificate in Fitness (Foundation Skills) (Level 2) – this is the organisation's biggest and core programme.

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 external evaluation and review (EER) was conducted in April 2013. Prior to the EER visit, the lead evaluator visited Netfit and met with the owner to discuss

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and agree the scope and process for the EER. The evaluation team consisted of two evaluators. As no face-to-face classes were operating during the week that the EER was scheduled, a one-hour visit was made in early April to coincide with a 'fitness lab', when the evaluators met with 16 current students. A one-day EER visit was made to the Netfit site in Ellerslie two weeks later, where the evaluation team reviewed a range of documentation and met with the owner and staff (teaching, student support and administration), two graduate students, two current students and an external consultant. The evaluation team also had telephone discussions with six external parties representing aspects of the fitness industry and including Skills Active, the industry training organisation (ITO) with responsibility for qualifications in the fitness industry.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Network for Fitness Professionals Limited**.

Student achievement on Netfit courses is very good. For instance, of the 28 enrolments in the National Certificate in Fitness in 2010, 21 students, or 75 per cent, had successfully completed their qualification by 2012. A further four students were expected to complete in the current semester, which will bring the overall qualification achievement to 90 per cent. This is an outstanding result for a distance delivery programme. The staff members at Netfit have a strong focus on student achievement and are well supported by management in their endeavours.

Feedback from students and external stakeholders indicates that courses have an appropriate mix of theory and practice and are delivered in a manner that enables learners to understand and acquire useful practical skills and knowledge. Graduates and external organisations report that the skills and knowledge gained by students are immediately applicable to work and are valued by both the graduates and industry. Netfit also provides value within its community through the school and community-based programmes it delivers.

Netfit has student support structures that are appropriate to the needs of the students and minimise barriers to achieving.

Discussions with stakeholders indicated that Netfit employs lecturers who are very experienced and highly respected by the fitness industry. The organisation engages well with its profession and industry, is providing quality training to the fitness profession and is valued for the positive contribution it makes.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Network for Fitness Professionals Limited**.

Netfit has established a highly reflective organisation and a culture that encourages students, staff and stakeholders to discuss their performance and put forward ideas for improvement. The organisation has been in business for 25 years and is long-term in its thinking. Staff and management are closely attuned to the needs of the students and the fitness industry. Student achievement is examined individually and Netfit has a strong focus on student achievement. A more formal analysis of achievement statistics and identification of key stress points in the programmes would help to identify ways to further improve the student experience. Staff members are encouraged to take opportunities for reflection on their role, which benefits students through improved teaching techniques. The TEO has systems to

gather and collate feedback from learners and uses the information effectively to bring about enhancements.

The evaluation team believes that as self-assessment processes continue to be implemented at Netfit, and staff members further engage with the key evaluation questions, significant and meaningful ongoing improvements will continue.

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**.

Student achievement on Netfit courses is very good. For instance, of the 28 enrolments in the National Certificate in Fitness in 2010, 21 students, or 75 per cent, had successfully completed their qualification by 2012. A further four students were expected to complete in the current semester, which will bring the overall qualification achievement to 90 per cent. The national average qualification completion, sourced from TEC educational performance indicators at this level, is 61 per cent. The Netfit results are particularly impressive given that it is a distance delivery programme and these traditionally have qualification completion rates below the face-to-face equivalent.

Both the organisation and its staff have a strong focus on learner achievement. Staff at Netfit demonstrated a good understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement and regularly analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement. The organisation has weekly meetings of management and administration staff, and at these meetings ideas for improving course delivery and learner achievement are discussed and agreed. Similar conversations with contract staff take place at a debrief meeting at the end of each module.

Students reported that they received timely, accurate and supportive feedback on their progress from Netfit staff, which helps them to monitor their own achievement and motivates them to complete.

Although student achievement on every course is examined individually, and Netfit management and teaching staff have a good understanding of achievement on their courses, further organisation-wide enhancements to the way in which Netfit analyses student achievement will lead to further improvements. For instance, the flexible nature of the programme delivery is a two-edged sword – while it enables students to study at their own pace, employers and students report that at times they would like more structure to incentivise and motivate them to reach study milestones and therefore complete the qualification in less time. Netfit is working on improved systems to monitor student progress on an individual and collective level. The evaluation team is confident that Netfit will continue to use this information constructively for the benefit of students.

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**.

Evidence from stakeholders, including learners, indicates that Netfit engages exceptionally well with its industry and is highly valued for the contribution that it makes. Employer organisations interviewed reported very high levels of satisfaction with Netfit's programmes and the quality of the graduates.

Many of the students attending Netfit courses are in employment, while others are completing the course to enable them to gain employment. The courses are directly related to that employment. Through the courses, learners acquire useful skills and knowledge which they can apply within their workplace. The ITO and employers spoken to during the EER were very satisfied with the value that they and the industry received from the training provided by Netfit. The ITO also commented positively about Netfit's regular communication to discuss industry trends and to gather feedback on how well Netfit was meeting industry needs. The employers commented that, although they had regular communication with Netfit, they would appreciate more opportunity to provide formal feedback about the courses.

Staff and industry professionals reported that students are learning useful technical skills and staff see positive changes in students' confidence and attitudes as they progress. The merit of the programme lies in both the long-term professional outcomes for students and the attributes such as confidence, self-esteem and positive attitudes that they acquire on the course.

Netfit has not to date formally tracked graduate outcomes but has anecdotal evidence of positive outcomes from a large number of graduate students. Netfit provides support and guidance for graduates to gain employment and believes that the majority of those graduates who do not already have employment in the industry gain employment as a result of completing the qualification.

Netfit courses are recognised by the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) which enables Netfit graduates to register with REPs. REPs is the (voluntary) registration body for exercise professionals, exercise facilities and fitness education providers in New Zealand. Netfit graduates have also met registration requirements with the equivalent registration body in Australia.

Netfit also adds value in its community by, for instance, the community coaching programme, health promotion programmes within the Pasifika community and a partnership programme with One Tree Hill College. Many of these activities are delivered at low, or no, cost as part of Netfit's commitment to the community.

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**.

Netfit's regular and ongoing interaction with its stakeholders is a central feature of the organisation. Mechanisms employed include ongoing contact with employers and students, student satisfaction surveys and participation in professional bodies and industry forums.

This interaction is typified in the way Netfit designs its courses around the needs of the industry and students, and then delivers training in a blended manner that fits the needs of the students. Netfit has designed its courses around the needs of employers and students in the first instance, then mapped unit standards or the national certificates into the courses, rather than starting with the unit standards and assuming they will meet client needs.

Workshops and labs to support distance delivery are delivered where and when the student demand is situated. In these cases, fitness centres are hired on a casual basis in regional centres. Netfit has systems and processes to ensure that premises are fit for purpose and that the learning environments it creates are suited to the needs of learners.

Netfit has a number of trainers available, and for any given course uses the trainer who will best match the learning style and industry background of the target group.

Netfit utilises a variety of mechanisms to understand what students want and regularly invites feedback from them. Administration and support staff regularly contact distance students to discuss their progress and help set goals. Staff and students interviewed at this evaluation confirmed that this was valued and contributed well to their overall progress. Some students and employers commented that they would like this contact to be more regular and more structured, which is a significant factor for a distance learning programme and should be cause for concern.

As well as the formal student feedback process, Netfit staff members are contactable by telephone or email, and it is clear that students approach them to discuss problems and issues. Staff members were able to cite examples of how course content, delivery or assessment methodology had been changed as a result of feedback from learners or external stakeholders. For instance, as a result of feedback Netfit recently stopped using a 'body composition' examination and assessed that component with a series of smaller assessments.

The organisation has worked hard over time to ensure that the teaching is closely related to the needs of the students. Students complete written feedback

periodically, and this information is used effectively to improve teaching and other services to students. The administration team has a practice of collecting frequently asked questions (FAQs) by students. These are then shared at staff meetings, which enables staff to anticipate issues and provide proactive responses, or, if the FAQs are content related, to adjust the delivery to ensure that students fully understand the teaching.

The owner of the organisation has engaged with the NZQA qualifications review process by providing feedback to the sector representative. The ITO commented that Netfit staff members are always willing and able to participate in industry forums and provide valuable input.

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**.

There was clear evidence of good teaching practice taking place at Netfit. Staff are enthusiastic and passionate about their curriculum and teaching and are well supported by management. Every staff member at Netfit has a role in student learning, and they take a collegial, whole-of-organisation approach to ensuring that all students achieve. The strong rapport between students and staff was evident from discussions and evaluation survey outcomes. Students responded well to the open, friendly style and have good access to the teaching staff outside of class hours through email, phone or in person.

Teachers and students relate well to each other and students and industry spoke very highly of Netfit's teaching staff. Netfit has, over time, employed and developed a unique and highly qualified cohort of teaching staff. Staff qualifications range from national certificate to PhD and all staff have comprehensive industry experience in New Zealand and internationally. Several of Netfit's staff have, or still do, represent New Zealand at Olympic and world championship level. Netfit staff regularly present at national and international conferences and workshops.

As well as being well qualified in their various disciplines, Netfit teaching staff members all hold teaching qualifications and most have extensive teaching experience in vocational, school and university settings.

There was evidence of the whole organisation purposely engaging in meaningful discussion about teaching practice and student progress. Teaching staff spoke about how they share ideas, experiences and knowledge through their daily interactions, staff meetings, peer observations and professional development activities. Netfit management closely monitors student and client feedback and takes immediate action where there is any indication of less than satisfactory delivery.

Netfit staff members engage in peer observation on an ongoing basis. Teaching staff commented on the value of peer observation and were able to cite examples of how they had improved teaching delivery as a result. Staff members are not reviewed on a regular, formal basis, but this does not preclude regular and ongoing feedback of a formative nature.

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 **Good**.

Netfit has found through experience that many of the support needs of students are centred on fitting the demands of their study around already busy working and family lives. The organisation has developed a mentoring model that has successfully responded to this need.

Pre-course information and guidance is appropriate to the programmes offered and learners commented that they found the enrolment process very friendly. Timely progression through the courses could be enhanced by a more detailed individual learning planning process shortly after enrolment. Some students are taking several years to complete the qualification, which realistically should take about one year. Students and employers commented that an individualised plan with milestones would motivate students to finish more quickly. This would also assist Netfit to further identify stress points for students and proactively support students through them.

Learners with reading and writing difficulties are able to complete most assessments verbally or practically or by using a reader/writer. In these cases, there are formal processes to ensure that the assessment is valid and consistent.

Netfit has recognised and regularly discussed among staff the needs of the various cultural groups who attend their courses, particularly Pasifika and Māori, and make a sincere effort to be sensitive to those needs. To date, the organisation has not formally collected data regarding ethnicity and achievement.

Students are able to get contact details for each other at labs and workshops and are encouraged to communicate to share ideas and support. This process could be further enhanced for the benefit of students by including online discussions and forums earlier in the students' learning journey.

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**.

Netfit has strong leadership and a clear vision and understanding of its business. The owner has been a leader in the fitness industry for over 30 years and clearly understands where the organisation's market niche lies. Much of the organisational strategy is not formally documented, but management and staff members have a common understanding of vision and direction, and their recent self-assessment document provides direction for future actions.

Effective resourcing is planned and provided for all courses. The Netfit premises are ideally located and well suited to the training. Having the block course training take place within a commercial fitness centre adds important context to the training.

The organisation has, over time, employed, developed and retained a competent, well-qualified and dedicated group of staff whom it supports effectively to foster educational achievement. Staff obviously enjoy the environment and are valued by the organisation. Courses are scheduled to ensure that there is always a back-up trainer available in the event of sickness or other unplanned unavailability.

Monitoring of performance at all levels of the organisation is regular, transparent and open, although a greater level of systematisation would assist Netfit to identify opportunities for improvement. The organisation enthusiastically encourages opportunities for reflection on its role and how to better meet student and industry needs. This has led to a reflective environment and a 'no-blame' culture throughout the organisation. Evidence indicates that the owner and staff actively seek feedback from many sources to use as a learning and improvement tool.

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: National Certificate in Fitness (Foundation Skills) (Level 2)

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

NZQA recommends that Netfit:

- Continue development in the collection of data for self-assessment
- Build capability in analysing this data
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive self-assessment regime that leads to further improvement in student outcomes.

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