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Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Zealand Dental Association

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 13 September 2017

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Final Report

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:	New Zealand Dental Association (NZDA)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	23 December 2009
Location:	NZDA House, 1/195 Main Highway, Ellerslie, Auckland
Delivery sites:	Workplace and at regional sites for lectures
Courses currently delivered:	New Zealand Dental Association Certificate in Dental Assisting (Level 3) Short professional development courses and activities for NZDA members such as lectures, seminars and conferences.
Code of Practice signatory:	Not a signatory
Number of students:	Domestic: 2014-2016 learner numbers ranged from 158 to 180. In 2017 student numbers are 178. Māori are 22 per cent and Pasifika 2 per cent. Most students are female (97 per cent) and aged 30 years and under.
Number of staff:	Three full-time and two part-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	New Zealand Dental Association Certificate in Dental Assisting (Level 3)

Distinctive characteristics:	<p>NZDA is an incorporated society for dentists . Ninety-eight per cent of registered dentists in New Zealand are NZDA members. Members who are in clinical practice are registered with the Dental Council of New Zealand. NZDA provides its members with services and support including education and training relevant to dental practice in New Zealand.</p> <p>The Dental Council of New Zealand is the regulator for the sector. Continuing professional development activities are verified by NZDA on behalf of the Dental Council.</p> <p>The New Zealand Dental Association Certificate in Dental Assisting is open to staff employed by NZDA members, employees of the University of Otago and employees of district health boards.</p> <p>All students must be employed in the role of dental assistant for a minimum of 20 hours per week under the supervision of a registered dentist. The registered dentist must be able to provide workplace assessment and support and is called the workplace supervisor.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>The current programme will expire at the end of 2017 and NZDA is currently developing a new programme which will incorporate two New Zealand Certificates. NZDA will soon make an application to NZQA for approval.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>The previous external evaluation and review (EER) was conducted in May 2013. At that visit, NZQA was Confident in NZDA's educational performance and in its capability in self-assessment.</p>

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER included one focus area: New Zealand Dental Association Certificate in Dental Assisting (Level 3).

The Certificate in Dental Assisting is a one-year programme and aims to provide knowledge and practical experience to equip dental assistants to work competently and safely assisting a dentist, dental therapist or dental hygienist during oral health care procedures. The training is delivered throughout the country through an online

programme of modules, assessed and supported by a workplace supervisor and includes two optional lectures facilitated by five regional coordinators. Workplace supervisors and regional coordinators are registered dentists, hold a current practising certificate and are NZDA members.

NZDA has conducted dental assistant training for over 25 years. The certificate is the only training programme for dental assistants currently offered by NZDA and has been developed in accordance with NZDA Codes of Practice, Dental Council New Zealand Practice Standards, Australian and New Zealand Standards and legislative requirements as they relate to the delivery of clinical oral health services.

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 evaluation team of two visited NZDA's office over two days. Interviews were conducted with the chief executive officer, associate director research and policy, events and education coordinator, administrative assistant and the Auckland regional coordinator. Phone interviews were conducted with two regional coordinators, four workplace supervisors, the course developer, Chair of the Dental Council and representative of the New Zealand Dental Assistants Association and two current students who were about to complete the course.

In addition to the documents provided for the EER scoping exercise, the EER team sighted and was provided with various documents pertaining to the New Zealand dental practice environment (for context), course structure and the course developer, completed learner portfolios of evidence, PTE operations, regional coordinators, workplace supervisors and NZDA governance, leadership and management, and information on other NZDA educational activities.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance and capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **New Zealand Dental Association**.

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **New Zealand Dental Association**.

The specialist design, effective delivery of the dental assistant certificate and very high rates of achievement demonstrate that NZDA is comprehensively meeting the needs of learners and key stakeholders. Significantly, all stakeholders highly value the improved confidence and competence of the dental assistant through the knowledge and skills acquired. These have a direct impact on patient welfare, benefit the professional development of the dental assistant, and provide confidence for dentists who are professionally and legally responsible for their dental assistants' practice.

The NZDA programme is highly relevant and delivered mostly on-job and online. The regulatory body, the Dental Council, and the New Zealand Dental Assistant Association endorse the quality of the programme and recognise the benefits for the sector. The programme is benchmarked against similar programmes for dental assistants in Scotland and Australia and provides validation of the quality of the programme. These well-regarded outcomes that benefit all stakeholders and the high rates of achievement have been evident for several years.

NZDA has comprehensive systems and processes for review which it implements systematically. Learners, stakeholders and the programme developer have input into the programme content and annual programme review. A key focus is ensuring any changes to legislation and standards of practice are incorporated into the programme, accurately reflecting the impact on the dental assistant role. Other useful changes occur to improve the resources that support learning, including more substantive information about assessment provided to workplace supervisors. Overall, NZDA is open and responsive to feedback.

There are areas where self-assessment could be improved. These include further enquiry into achievement outcomes, providing a platform for learners to engage with each other to improve academic and social networks, and creating a mechanism to gather feedback from graduates. These points are mitigated to a large extent through the purposeful and effective self-assessment that is already occurring, which is producing meaningful and relevant information used to improve the programme and delivery. NZDA takes seriously its compliance responsibilities. NZDA engages with and keeps abreast of changes and requirements within the

tertiary education sector and, where necessary, seeks expertise to support and ensure the programme requirements are understood and met.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do students 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 **Excellent**.

Learners undertaking the New Zealand Dental Association Certificate in Dental Assisting are achieving very well. The certificate is the primary training that NZDA delivers, and the very high rates of achievement have been consistent over the past three years, reflecting the similar results found at the previous EER in 2013.

Course completion rates are: 2013, 96 per cent; 2014, 94 per cent; 2015, 98 per cent; and 2016, 90 per cent. Māori rates of achievement are on a par with all learners. The number of Pasifika learners is very small and these learners achieve equally well. Withdrawal and non-completion rates range from 2-10 per cent. Non-completion is mostly due to the learners' inability to complete the modules within the required timeframe because of a change in their personal circumstances. More detailed enquiry and analysis of the learners and their achievement outcomes may be beneficial so that NZDA can determine more specifically any commonalities that have an impact on course completion.

The high rate of achievement is authenticated through continued enrolments year on year, the independent online assessment, and validation of skill development and competency through workplace observation assessed by the learner's supervisor. The supervisor is a registered dentist and accountable for the dental assistant's performance within the practice.

Systematic processes and a comprehensive online platform enable NZDA to closely monitor learner progress and achievement. Learners, NZDA administration staff and regional coordinators are alerted promptly if a learner is not progressing as expected. Extensions are able to be negotiated and the conditions for a re-sit, if required, are clear and rigorous.

Learners acquire and apply useful skills and new knowledge to improve their workplace practice. The primary benefit for learners – reiterated by all stakeholders – is the theoretical understanding gained which provides the rationale for and emphasises the importance of the tasks and activities performed every day within the dental assistant's role, which has a direct impact on patient comfort and safety.

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 students?

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**.

All stakeholders recognise the significant value of the qualification and the resulting outcomes which are held in high regard. The programme is endorsed by the regulatory body – the Dental Council of New Zealand – and the newly established New Zealand Dentist Assistant Association. The association believes the qualification supports the professionalisation of this workforce to the extent that it is considering successful completion as a requirement for membership of the association in the future.

Dental assistants work under the delegated authority of the dentist. As such, dentists prefer to have competent dental assistants working in the dental practice. Dentists show their support for the certificate by undertaking the role of workplace supervisor which is a significant time commitment and includes responsibility for assessment, observation and supporting the learner throughout the programme. Most dentists also finance the cost of the course.

Learners and workplace supervisors identify a range of important outcomes such as having the theoretical background to improve knowledge and awareness of the dental assistant's responsibilities. A high proportion of graduates receive a substantial increase in their income, which recognises the contribution they make to the practice through their increase in confidence and their competency undertaking the tasks and duties of the role.

Feedback via surveys and through NZDA's embedded engagement with industry (as an incorporated society for dentists) convincingly demonstrates that all stakeholders believe the certificate produces relevant and worthwhile outcomes. More meaningful information to understand the longer-term benefits could be useful if feedback was also collected from graduates.

NZDA contributes to community life through the mission and range of functions it undertakes as an incorporated society. Examples include: oral health promotion and benevolence and community aid grants – such as partnering with organisations to provide free dental care and supporting aid projects in New Zealand and in the Pacific region.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant 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 **Excellent**.

The Certificate in Dental Assisting is designed and delivered to uniquely meet the needs of this important workforce. Within New Zealand, the qualification provides a national benchmark in practice and in knowledge for dental assistants and NZDA codes of practice, and meets Dental Council practice standards. Internationally, the programme is benchmarked against similar programmes for dental assistants in Scotland and Australia. These programmes – like the NZDA certificate – are based on national needs and the same or very similar regulatory standards.

Dental assistants provide a crucial role in the practices they work in and have responsibilities that have an impact on patient safety and wellbeing, such as infection control, sterilisation, disinfection and patient communication. The NZDA programme is developed to match and meet these needs, and measures the dental assistant's understanding and performance of these important practices.

The programme, learning and assessment activities are highly relevant, and learning is applied directly to the workplace. Delivery is an integration of online learning with on-job training combined with health care delivery. Two seminars are available during the year for those in regional centres to attend. The resulting knowledge and skills acquisition is authentic and meaningful.

The curriculum is logical and delivered sequentially, and progress from module to module builds on learning. Learners have the opportunity to formally test their knowledge with formative assessment activities prior to completing the summative online assessment. NZDA could improve the interactive delivery component of the online programme which is the primary teaching and learning tool. A recommendation from the previous EER suggested that NZDA conduct a moderation project. This has not been undertaken because of the impact of the Targeted Review of Qualifications and because the programme is due to expire. However, academic standards and integrity are sufficiently robust and the evaluators noted the enhanced quality of the resources and information provided to workplace supervisors. Assessment is transparent and valid and undertaken by registered dentists who are responsible for on-job assessment as the workplace supervisors and regional coordinators who assess the learner portfolio.

Systematic, ongoing review of the programme occurs annually, and learners' input and suggestions are considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into the programme. An example is changes to the learner guides and assessment questions. NZDA's professional relationships with the Dental Council, the New

Zealand Dental Assistant Association and NZDA members ensure national and international trends within the profession (new techniques and technologies) as well as changes to legislation and standards are incorporated into the learning. Recent examples include resuscitation requirements for dental assistants and changes to the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Overall, stakeholders are convinced and very positive about the programme content, delivery and outcomes, and say needs are matched and met through the delivery of this quality programme.

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

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**.

Learners take responsibility for their own learning and progress as they engage independently with education and training resources and initiate on-job activities and assessment with the workplace supervisor. The success of this process is indicated by the high rate of programme achievement.

NZDA provides learners with useful information such as an introduction booklet, learner guides, a workplace log book and a more recent initiative to enhance learning with a reflective practice diary. Timely feedback and prompts to the learner are provided as NZDA monitors the learner's engagement with the resources and activities.

Mechanisms for support reflect the design of the programme. Learners are provided with support predominantly through the workplace supervisor, who in most circumstances is also the dental assistant's employer and has an investment in their success. Systematic monitoring of learner progress and achievement by NZDA is thorough. Any indication that a learner is not progressing, as measured against specific timeframes, prompts notification of the regional coordinator to follow up. Although regional coordinators are available upon request from a learner at any time, indications are this support mechanism is not well used.

There is no opportunity for learners to engage easily with each other unless they live in regional centres and attend the seminars provided by NZDA. Learners have identified in feedback to NZDA that their experience and learning could be enhanced through engagement with other learners. Suggestions include online forum and discussion groups and regional or local study groups. This learner feedback was also evident at the previous EER. Considering the context of delivery, the level of the programme and the lack of any similar alternative, this

seems a reasonable suggestion for NZDA to investigate for improving academic and social support networks for the development of the new programme.

1.5 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 purpose and direction of NZDA is very clear. The NZDA board meets twice a year and includes representation from its membership across the country. The board provides governance oversight and strategic guidance, with the chief executive and associate director providing operational direction and day-to-day management in delivering the strategic and business plans.

The PTE is a small component of the society but benefits from the relationships and sector expertise contained within the society and obtained from a wide range of external sources, all of which are used to inform education and training.

The NZDA board is kept informed about the certificate programme outcomes and objectives through reports which are reviewed and discussed. The associate director provides effective oversight of the PTE functions and operations including any developments that impinge on the dental assistant course. These developments are identified and discussed, and changes – for example to legislation or codes of practice – are incorporated appropriately into the dental assistant certificate. Changes that occur are designed to maintain the certificate's relevance to current practice and the needs of the membership while ensuring that the course remains accessible and at the appropriate academic level for dental assistants.

The associate director engages with and keeps abreast of changes and requirements within the tertiary education sector, and when necessary seeks expertise to support and ensure the PTE and programme requirements are understood and met. NZDA was an active participant in the Targeted Review of Qualifications. The development of a new programme is well underway which will incorporate two New Zealand Certificates, providing qualification transportability for students in the health sector. NZDA is consulting with its membership and stakeholders through this process as the structure of the current programme means that most dentists have had direct experience of supervising dental assistants in their practice.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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**.

Although there are no formal statutory requirements for compliance for NZDA within dentistry as an incorporated society for dentists registered with the Dental Council, NZDA takes its accountabilities to its own membership seriously. NZDA ensures expectations outlined in the NZDA Code of Ethics and high professional standards detailed in an extensive range of Codes of Practice are met by registered members. These accountabilities are monitored and well documented by the board and members' representatives.

NZDA delivers professional development and training to members that meets the continuing professional development standards required by the Dental Council. This key stakeholder reports high levels of satisfaction and confidence in the provision of these services and say they meet industry legal and ethical standards.

NZDA takes seriously its own compliance and has processes and monitoring to ensure that compliance responsibilities are identified, understood and managed effectively. The associate director attends NZQA workshops and Targeted Review of Qualifications forums, and reviews available information to keep up to date with changes within tertiary education, including reading to understand the Education Act. Where necessary, NZDA contracts expertise and advice.

NZQA attestations and returns have been met within required timeframes. The certificate programme is being delivered consistent with NZQA approvals and is compliant with the NZQA Rules that relate to EER and ongoing PTE registration. The organisation contracts an independent and experienced educator to design the programme to ensure academic standards are met. There was no indication compliance accountabilities are not being met. NZDA has a clear understanding of their compliance accountabilities and manages these effectively to ensure obligations are met.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: New Zealand Dental Association Certificate in Dental Assisting (Level 3)

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that the New Zealand Dental Association consider:

- the usefulness of surveying graduates to gather more meaningful information to better understand the long-term benefits for graduates of the Certificate in Dental Assisting
- the best way to respond to learner feedback for opportunities for learners to engage with other learners and improve academic and social support networks, particularly as the new programme is developed.

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