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# Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Zealand School of Dance

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 25 May 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 School of Dance (NZSD)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	1991
Location:	11 Hutchison Street, Newtown, Wellington
Delivery sites:	One as above
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New Zealand School of Dance Certificate in Dance Performance (Level 6)</li><li>• New Zealand School of Dance Diploma in Dance Performance (Level 7)</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 66 full-time students (some identify as more than one ethnicity)  Approximate percentages: New Zealand Pakeha – 32 per cent; Australian – 41 per cent; New Zealand Māori – 6 per cent; Pasifika – 7 per cent  International: 14 full-time students – 17 per cent
Number of staff:	Nine full-time and 20 part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	NZQF subfield – Dance to level 6
Distinctive characteristics:	NZSD is a registered charitable trust, governed by a board of trustees and managed by a director and

business manager. It operates from Te Whaea: National Dance and Drama Centre in Newtown, Wellington. NZSD offers tertiary-level education and training in both classical ballet and contemporary techniques. NZSD aims to prepare students for professional dance careers. Since 2014, NZSD has operated under a memorandum of understanding with the Royal New Zealand Ballet, which recognises NZSD the 'official school' of the Royal New Zealand Ballet.

Recent significant changes:	Nil
Previous quality assurance history:	At the previous external evaluation and review (EER) conducted in 2013, NZQA was Confident in NZSD's educational performance and Confident in NZSD's capability in self-assessment.
Other:	NZSD is funded under s321 of the Education Act Special Category Funding (School in the National Interest).

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This EER included the following two focus areas, chosen following discussion with the organisation:

- International Student Support and Wellbeing
- New Zealand School of Dance Certificate in Dance Performance (Level 6), and the New Zealand School of Dance Diploma in Dance Performance (Level 7).

These focus areas cover all the educational activities of the organisation.

## 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.*

Prior to the on-site visit, the lead evaluator discussed the planning for this evaluation with the NZSD business manager. This included exploring and agreeing on the scope for the visit, which was based on the current number of enrolled

domestic and international students and the programmes offered. Two evaluators spent two days at NZSD. During this time, the evaluators held face-to-face interviews with a group of students from each programme, including international students, their teachers, management, and the chair of the board of trustees. Phone interviews were held with several stakeholders during and after the site visit. A wide range of NZSD records and documents were reviewed to confirm and validate information discussed during these interviews.

# Summary of Results

## Statements of confidence on educational performance and capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance, and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **New Zealand School of Dance**.

The key reasons for this level of confidence are:

- Student achievement rates are consistently very high.
- For at least the last eight years NZSD has consistently exceeded the Tertiary Education Commission performance targets.
- Many graduates gain high-value, dance-related employment on graduation.
- NZSD has developed and maintained very strong networks within New Zealand and internationally, enabling the PTE to attract many New Zealand and world-renowned dancers and choreographers as visiting teachers, which contributes significantly to the depth of student learning and offers opportunities for teacher development.
- The director's involvement in international dance competitions, combined with extensive networks, enables the school to stay current with international trends and good-practice dance teaching and choreography.
- The school enjoys a strong reputation within New Zealand as well as internationally. This is reflected in the number of high-performing dancers from New Zealand and overseas enrolling at NZSD.
- Programmes are well structured and focused on students' well-being, with specific support provided through specialists for students' nutritional, physical and psychological health.
- The organisation has strong and effective governance and operational management, and highly effective leadership. There is a clear focus on managing risk and ensuring the organisation manages its most important compliance matters. A professional advisory panel has strong industry membership and provides effective input to the organisation on the New Zealand and international dance industry.
- NZSD has a memorandum of understanding with the Royal New Zealand Ballet, which recognises NZSD as its official school. Through this memorandum, many graduates gain employment with the Royal New Zealand Ballet.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Findings 1.2.

- The school has strong student and industry needs assessment processes. It understands industry requirements and students' needs on entry and during training, and prepares students to maintain their physical and psychological safety post-graduation as performers.
- The organisation's policies and procedures are appropriate for a school of this nature, and are regularly reviewed and updated, ensuring that the school is adapting to changing student needs as well as changes in industry and education regulations.
- Learner achievement is regularly monitored, recorded and benchmarked year-on-year, and employment outcomes are well understood, with longer-term employment information coming from a wide range of sources including social media, and through extensive industry networks worldwide.
- Assessment processes are fair, consistent, and valid. A small proportion – approximately 10 per cent – of the level 6 programme is theory based, and there are extensive opportunities for the application of this theory in practice, with 90 per cent of the programme being assessed as practical dance. Most practical assessments are assessed by two teachers and, at times, by a panel, providing strong moderation processes.
- International students' needs are well met. The requirements of The Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice are met, with strong processes ensuring the students are well supported and their well-being needs are met.

# Findings<sup>2</sup>

## 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**.

NZSD has consistently exceeded its funding targets set by the Tertiary Education Commission (confirmed by data from 2010-2015).<sup>3</sup>

The targets for the level 6 certificate that are exceeded are:

- 75 per cent of students graduate with the qualification
- 20 per cent of graduates gain a contract related to the qualification
- 80 per cent of graduates continue on to further education within 12 weeks of graduating.

The targets for the level 7 diploma that are exceeded are:

- 75 per cent of students graduate with the qualification
- 60 per cent of graduates gain a contract related to their qualification within 26 weeks of graduating.

Māori and Pasifika achievement rates are also high, but cannot be compared on a percentage basis due to their low numbers (between 2014 and 2016 there were five, three and four Māori and Pasifika enrolments respectively). Of these 12 students, two withdrew early, and the remaining 10 either progressed to further training and graduated at level 6 and level 7, or are currently still studying at level 6 or 7. These figures indicate that the school is catering for the needs of the students very well and supporting them to succeed. Further, the two Māori and Pasifika students from the 2014 cohort who graduated at level 7 have both gained employment, one with the Melbourne City Ballet and one with the Royal New Zealand Ballet.

Students also achieve a wide range of soft skills, useful in any employment situation, such as a professional work ethic, communication skills, confidence, passion, self-discipline and time management.

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<sup>2</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

<sup>3</sup> Source: NZSD funding agreement reports to the Tertiary Education Commission, and confirmed by the commission.



NZSD maintains accurate reporting of its single data return on student achievement and progress and reports quarterly to the board of trustees. The PTE moderates the assessment process (which is 90 per cent practical assessment at level 6 and 100 per cent practical assessment level 7) through joint assessments by two tutors, and panel assessments. This is further strengthened using internal and external assessors, bringing a current commercial perspective and reality check.

There was clear evidence of strong reflective practice and open and clear communication invited from students and external professional dancers and choreographers, both from within New Zealand and overseas.

## 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 **Excellent**.

Both qualifications and employment are of high value to students. The knowledge, techniques, skills and personal attributes the students gain are of high value to dance and performance companies. Some dance performance companies have employed many graduates from the school.

Data for the 2015 diploma graduates shows that 13 graduates gained employment (76 per cent), with an additional graduate working in a related field of music, lifting the overall employment rate to 82 per cent. Thirteen graduates from 2016 gained dance contracts. Of the remaining two, one was injured and one is auditioning in Europe. Nine of the 2015 certificate graduates gained employment (34 per cent), 54 per cent went into the diploma programme, and the remainder either withdrew from the certificate programme early due to injury or found dance performance was not for them.

Since 2008, 11 diploma graduates have gained full-time employment with the Royal New Zealand Ballet, and 16 others have appeared in productions. Currently, 10 of the 36 Royal New Zealand Ballet dancers are graduates of NZSD, indicating the effectiveness of this relationship and the clear focus on achievement and outcomes. Overall, these are very good results.

The memorandum of understanding with the Royal New Zealand Ballet facilitates a special relationship between the school and the company, producing outcomes of mutual benefit and value. These include, for example, the mutual use of each other's teaching spaces and the sharing of professional practice.

The qualification confirms that students have the required knowledge, skills and awareness of the dance industry and their own personal attributes, strengths and ability to maintain their physical and mental well-being.

Some students find that dance performance is not for them, and some suffer injuries, restricting their ability to participate. Some of these students have gone on to successfully study and gain employment in other related fields such as physiotherapy, sports psychology, and sport and fitness training. NZSD has rigorous student selection processes, but the physical demands of dance performance are not fully apparent until students are well into their programme.

A major contributor to maintaining the value of outcomes for stakeholders and for students was the organisation's capability for building and maintaining networks worldwide. The director is actively involved in judging international dance competitions, which also provides opportunities for not only sustaining professional networks but also for identifying potential students.

The school uses social media and informal networks for tracking long-term graduate outcomes, with staff noting that graduates often return to visit the school when they are back in New Zealand.

### 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 programmes currently delivered were originally approved by NZQA in 1996, but have been continually updated in terms of current good practice and incorporating improved techniques of training and technology over the last 20 years.

Staff, stakeholders and students interviewed at this evaluation all commented on the excellence noted in continual improvements to techniques and support processes to reduce injuries and develop confident dancers using current techniques, as well as maintaining a strong focus on traditional classical ballet. The school is incorporating sports psychology<sup>4</sup>, biomechanics and exercises to prepare for dance practice such as warming up and cooling down, and this is reported as being highly successful in contributing to reducing injuries.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A specialist in sports psychology visits NZSD regularly.

<sup>5</sup> Early withdrawals are largely due to physical injuries, and while specific injuries were not discussed at this evaluation, the early withdrawal rate has reduced from four in 2004 to two in 2005 and one in 2016. This was confirmed in discussions with stakeholders. This data is fully recorded and reviewed to continually explore ways to reduce injuries.

The internationally recognised visiting dancers and choreographers (approximately 10 each year) bring strength to the school, providing students with a wider range of knowledge and techniques than could otherwise be provided. Students interviewed noted that this was particularly engaging and valued, as was the role-modelling provided by second and third-year students.

The organisation has a very strong enrolment and selection process to ensure students possess the passion for dance performance and meet orthopaedic and other medical requirements to be able to sustain a three-year, intensively physical dance programme.<sup>6</sup> The low attrition rate attests to the success of this process.

The school is purpose-built, providing superb facilities including studio space, costume production, sprung floors, common space for students, a library and an auditorium. The programme includes facilitating student access to local productions and secondments, such as involvement with the World of Wearable Art production (WOW), among others.

The director and staff continually review and renew the programme and resources to ensure the programme is current and the students have access to the best resources. The visiting dancers and choreographers are a rich source of feedback and reflection for the school, and staff meet in various formats regularly – assemblies with students, staff meetings, and professional advisory panel meetings twice a year. Very strong active moderation processes are in place, as noted, including panel assessment and visiting teachers providing an external input and view.

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

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**.

Students are supported and involved in their learning to an exceptional level.

Student support starts with in-depth recruitment and enrolment processes, as noted, and this level of close support and monitoring continues throughout the programme. Class sizes are around 18 on average, as each yearly intake is split between classical ballet and contemporary dance. The small groups allow staff to get to know their students well and monitor their progress and identify emerging concerns quickly. This close support was confirmed by interviews with students, staff and stakeholders. NZSD provides a physiotherapist five days a week, access to

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<sup>6</sup> The certificate programme is two years and diploma one year.

Massey University student health services, and a Pilates room and equipment. Staff said they continually watch and monitor students for any indications of stress or physical ailments that may affect their dance performance training.

All year one students are offered hostel accommodation, and this is also available for second and third-year students if required. This provides some security for students in the tight and expensive Wellington rental market. Students interviewed spoke highly of this process and facility. All students have 24/7 phone access to support if needed, and staff maintain an open-door policy, providing easy access and support.

The student voice is facilitated in a range of ways. These include student assemblies, a student representative on the professional advisory panel, and a student representative on the board of trustees. Management said they receive better student feedback directly through these mechanisms than a previously used survey tool. There have been no student complaints, but there is a facility and process to receive these, if needed. It was evident to the evaluators that staff have strong empathy for students and there is a friendly but respectful relationship between students and staff.

Information and support provided to international students meet the requirements and the spirit of the Code of Practice. Students interviewed noted that they felt welcomed and supported. The weekly assembly provides an effective communication process for staff and students to share information and stay up to date with any arising issues. Personal matters are dealt with effectively on a one-to-one basis, and staff noted that the open common area, along with the small classes, provides staff with opportunities to observe students and identify whether there are stress or other health issues. International student files are well ordered and contain all relevant documents, such as copies of visas, insurance and passports, and evidence of student progress. International student numbers have remained at between 13 and 21 over the last four years, and students feel well integrated with the other students.

## 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 board of trustees and management have a clear focus on educational achievement, and support student achievement effectively, achieving strong results consistently over many years.<sup>7</sup>

NZSD has a clear organisational purpose and direction: 'to produce performance ready graduates, with advanced understanding of the theory underpinning dance practice'.

NZSD has maintained its unique position as a school in the national interest, and Special Category Funding under s321 of the Education Act. NZSD has established and maintained a strong reputation within New Zealand and reportedly a stronger reputation in Australia, where a significant proportion of students come from.<sup>8</sup> NZSD has a high profile and reputation internationally, established in part through staff involvement in judging at international dance competitions. This was confirmed through NZSD's ability to attract overseas professionals to visit as guest teachers, as well as through interviews with students, staff, external stakeholders and the board.

The organisation has strong and effective governance<sup>9</sup> and operational management, and highly effective leadership. A professional advisory panel has strong industry membership and provides effective input to the organisation on the New Zealand and international dance industry. Management reports to the board quarterly on education matters and all other aspects of the school, including resource updates and repairs (for example, new sprung dance floors), and financial matters. The board of trustees are largely members of the Institute of Directors and use the institute's self-review model, providing assurance of the board's effectiveness.

NZSD has established strong relationships with like-minded organisations, including signing a memorandum of understanding with the Royal New Zealand Ballet. This recognises NZSD as its official school for the Royal New Zealand Ballet, which employs many graduates. The former principal dancer for the Royal New Zealand Ballet is the current classical ballet teacher with NZSD.

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<sup>7</sup> Achievement and performance results sighted from 2010 to 2015. The 2016 final report to the Tertiary Education Commission was due 31 March 2017.

<sup>8</sup> One student noted that there are no equivalent schools with the quality of facilities and teaching in Australia.

<sup>9</sup> See Findings 1.6.

The Royal New Zealand Ballet's artistic director actively contributes to the teaching and assessment of NZSD students, and the two organisations share resources, teaching and studios, to their mutual benefit. This also ensures that teaching and the standards of assessment are closely aligned to industry expectations.

NZSD has appointed highly experienced and qualified staff for both classical ballet and contemporary dance. Professional development is regular and ongoing, involving, for example, peer teaching, visiting specialist teachers and choreographers, and panel assessment activities.

## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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**.

NZSD has a clear and effective focus on managing risk and ensuring the organisation manages its most important compliance matters. The board maintains an audit and risk sub-committee, and sets clear performance indicators for the NZSD director. The school business manager is tasked with ensuring the school is current with changes to legislation and regulations affecting the operations of the school. There is a very strong focus on the recent changes to health and safety legislation, and in monitoring student injury rates. It was noted at this evaluation that student early withdrawal rates (mainly due to injuries) have reduced in recent years.

The business manager actively monitors NZQA updates for rule changes that may affect the school, and is in close and regular contact with the Tertiary Education Commission funding advisor. Policies and procedures for ensuring compliance with the Code of Practice are rigorously implemented, and a review of international student records indicated no concerns. Programme planning and records show that the two approved programmes are delivered as approved in all respects.

These processes are resulting in regular monitoring of compliance matters affecting the school. The evaluation team identified that a recent change to one of NZQA's rules had been overlooked, and copies of all student assessments were not available, as is now required. However, there was no evidence to suggest that students' learning or the validity of assessment practice had been compromised. Assessment practice is strongly moderated through peer and panel assessment processes and through the engagement of teachers from the Royal New Zealand Ballet, and international dance and choreography specialists.

# Focus Areas

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

## 2.1 Focus area: International student support and well-being

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: Certificate in Dance Performance (Level 6) and Diploma in Dance Performance (Level 7)

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 New Zealand School of Dance:

- Consider how to spread the responsibility for monitoring compliance wider than the current practice, or develop scheduled checks to ensure staff are fully up to date.



# 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](http://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/>.*

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