

Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality

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Academic Audit

Summary Report

Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology

(December 2008)



INTRODUCTION:

The quality philosophy of the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT) is expressed in the following statement in the Quality Management System (QMS) Manual:

“The Management Team of NMIT will lead and support a continuing programme of quality improvement so that a climate is created where everyone works together to meet the needs of our customers ‘right first time, on time, every time’.

“NMIT makes a commitment to improve service delivery to our students, staff and external customers through continually improved leadership and teamwork, communication and training.”

In 2007 the Institute enrolled 9,058 students which produced an EFTS figure of 3101 of which 2,840 were TEC funded.

The Institute focuses its resources on the Nelson/Tasman/Marlborough region but also makes a significant contribution to the Aviation Industry nationally. Most programmes are delivered on the main campus in Nelson City, but there is a second major campus in Blenheim and aviation programmes are administered from a small campus at Woodbourne. Much of the delivery of the aviation programmes takes place at airport sites round the country. There are also some programmes offered on the Institute’s former Richmond Campus but these are now contracted out to Skills Update Training Institute (SUTI) along with a similar programme in Auckland.

A purpose built building for Tourism and Hospitality is expected to be completed in time for the 2009 academic year and funding of \$8.32 million has been approved for a building to accommodate Arts and Media.

The following changes in organisational structure have taken place since the mid-term review:

- The two Dean positions have been disestablished and replaced by one Director of Teaching & Learning.
- The position of Head of the School of Te Tari Māori / Māori Studies has been disestablished and a Director of Māori Education has been appointed with a responsibility for Iwi relations and with both an institutional and a school role.
- The functions of academic quality and curriculum development have been brought together under an Academic Manager.
- The Directorate, comprising the CEO, the Director of Education Planning & Investment, the Director of Finance & Corporate Services, the Director of Teaching & Learning, the Director of Marketing & Student Services and the Director of Māori Education now constitutes the senior management group.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

The Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology is continuing to be effective in meeting its stated aims of providing high quality and relevant vocationally oriented educational programmes, focusing its resources on the Nelson/Tasman and Marlborough regions but also making a significant contribution to the aviation industry nationally. In 2007 the Institute enrolled 9,058 students which produced an EFTS figure of 3101 of which 2,840 were TEC funded.

NMIT is to be commended on its decision to initiate a self assessment process in preparation for the introduction of the Self Assessment and External Evaluation and Review (SAEER) process into the TEI sector in 2009. Six focus areas were chosen for self assessment during 2008 according to the self assessment process outlined in its new policy. The focus areas covered the recommendations from the 2004 External Quality Audit and the 2006 Mid Term Review. Progress towards the finalisation of these is currently being monitored by the Quality Committee.

The Institute has recognised that there are gaps in its Quality Management System and has put in place a strategy to address these. However, at the time of audit, it did not have appropriate documented academic quality policies and/or procedures for all aspects of its operation and this was identified as a low risk non-compliance requiring corrective action. NMIT has agreed to provide a plan of action for this work to be completed before the end of 2009.

The audit team confirmed that Academic Board is acting as an effective forum for the discussion of academic matters and that it receives appropriate reports from the standing committees to which it has delegated effective decision making powers. It was recommended, however, that the terms of reference of two of the standing committees be reviewed to clarify their status and operation.

While the expressions of interest in meeting Treaty obligations are still very strong throughout the institution there is very little evidence of it on the ground and limited progress has been made on a number of Treaty of Waitangi issues since the last audit in 2004. The Audit Team has recommended the adoption of a plan which will consolidate the Institute's relationships with iwi, and better manage its internal processes to fulfil its obligations under the Treaty. The recent appointment of a Director of Māori Education with clear responsibilities in relation to both internal and external relations is seen as a positive move in this direction

NMIT has detailed and effective processes for programme development and review and the audit team found evidence that principal stakeholders were identified, regularly consulted, and kept informed about current educational programmes, student performance, and staffing matters. The audit team were impressed by the commitment shown by advisory committee members and believe that this is due in part to the value that NMIT places on their participation.

The Institute has developed a fruitful relationship with the local schools through a curriculum alignment project in Hairdressing operated in conjunction with Marlborough

Girls College. This programme has been running for 2 years and the first of these students are now enrolling on the full-time hairdressing programme.

Several new initiatives have been taken by the Institute to improve its management and information systems. These include the introduction of a Business Information system which is currently being installed and will help to monitor performance indicators and enable deeper analysis of business performance through its integration with existing systems such as Syllabus Plus and Artena. NMIT is also looking forward to using the information and knowledge gained from the TEC Benchmarking exercise. The timetabling programme, Syllabus Plus was introduced in 2006 as both an operational tool and as a means of informing planning decisions. The intended integration of this system with other new elements of the MIS should greatly enhance the institution's decision making capability. The Institute is also currently trialling a workload planning tool for academic staff with a view to establishing more effective and equitable workloads.

Staff and students generally indicated high levels of satisfaction with the library service and this was especially evident in relation to services to distance programmes delivered with partner providers. Programme leaders considered that the library held comprehensive stock and were always willing to purchase new resources on the recommendation of teaching staff. The library is building its collection of on-line databases as resources allow. However it is noted that a recommendation made in 2004 in relation to library resources to support the Graduate Diploma in Information Technology has still to be implemented and that some part-time and ACE students were denied borrowing rights at the NMIT (Nelson) library. Some students also voiced concern that the library was not open on Sundays. It has therefore been recommended that library access and operating hours be reviewed with a view to providing reasonable access to all NMIT students.

Health and safety practices were found to be well managed and documented although not all staff had completed their health and safety induction which had begun at the time of their initial orientation. It was evident, however, that health and safety is embedded in the content of the programmes delivered by the Institute.

Staff appraisals are expected to be completed by a staff member's immediate manager on an annual basis and the process includes the setting of performance objectives and agreeing training and development. While some managers have ensured that all of their staff are appraised as per policy, others, have yet to complete the individual appraisal requirements. As a result the audit team recommends that the institute ensures that all full time staff are appraised and have professional development plans completed in line with institutional policy. It was also recommended that ways to include part-time staff in this process should be investigated.

The Institute is to be complimented on the excellent student-tutor interactions which were evident, complemented by well organised central support services. The International students are also well supported with orientation processes which are comprehensive, well documented and student centred. In the case of the Certificate in Te Tuara me Te Tinana o Te Reo it was noted that all learning and pastoral support is

provided internally by fellow students and tutors as a result of the strength of the whanau environment where everybody helps each other.

Feedback from students confirmed that teaching/learning practices at NMIT are effective. Students in the NZ Diploma in Business were particularly complimentary on the delivery of all the courses they attended and students in the ACE Jewellery (Beginners) course were appreciative of the fact that the style of teaching enabled them to maintain the personal artistic nature of their work. It is recommended that, in order to ensure educationally sound and appropriate delivery of programmes NMIT consolidates this tradition of good teaching by formally defining what it regards as effective teaching and learning practices.

The Institute has an articulation agreement with Aoraki Polytechnic Diploma in Arts and Media and has contracts for the provision of teaching services with the Skills Update Training Institute (SUTI), Griffith University and various flying schools. These were found to contain clearly articulated requirements and responsibilities for each of the parties and met the standards set in the QMS.

The Institute has a clear set of procedures which govern the operation of work based training which are being consistently implemented and in the view of the panel the processes operating for work placement in the three programmes audited constitute an example of good practice.

Students were satisfied that assessment activities were consistent and appropriate for their programme/course, specifically the alignment of assessment with learning outcomes and the extensive and valuable feedback on their assessments received from tutors. There are robust safeguards in place to protect the confidentiality of student assessment results. The approach to moderation varied across those programmes audited, and while some programmes had comprehensive moderation plans and processes in place for both internal and external moderation, in at least one other case moderation had not been carried out during recent years. This had been noted as a matter of concern and action was seen to be being taken. It is recommended that greater attention be given to the approved moderation requirements for all programmes offered.

The Institute is to be commended on its ranking in the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) scale where its score of 0.33 places it ahead of most other regional ITPs. This provides clear evidence that some individuals and some teaching departments are actively involved in research and producing significant outputs and this is confirmed by the list of research outputs published in the NMIT Annual Report for 2007.

However the performance of tutors in degree programmes is not always at the level expected and there is no clear documentation on record describing the philosophy and expectations of the Institute as a whole with respect to research. It was reassuring, however, to hear the newly appointed Director of Teaching and Learning (who now has responsibility for leading research in the Institute) articulate a clear vision for research. It is important that this vision and its associated philosophy is fully documented in the QMS as part of the corrective actions being taken. The current provisions for providing

research time to tutors do not appear to be attractive to them and some spoke of the difficulty they had in organising allocated research time into coherent blocks which were necessary if they were to work effectively on their research. It is recommended that the Institute review the current conditions for the allocation and scheduling of degree tutors' research time with a view to improving the up-take of research conditions and the opportunity for such tutors to organise their research time into effective blocks.

In light of the initiatives already being taken by the Institute with respect to the required corrective action, and the fact that several key new appointments had recently been made with a clear understanding that the incumbents will address the outstanding issues, the audit team considered that Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology was continuing to meet the ITPNZ standards and should have its Quality Assured Status confirmed.

BOARD DECISION (8 December 2008)

That Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology be awarded Quality Assured Status for a further four years, consistent with ITP Quality requirements, subject to the ITP providing formal progress reports on its review of the QMS on 28th February 2009, 30th June 2009 and 30th November 2009, as set out in the agreed corrective actions.