

Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality

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Academic Audit

Summary Report

Tairawhiti Polytechnic

(November 2008)



INTRODUCTION:

Tairāwhiti Polytechnic focuses on providing education and training for the Gisborne and Wairoa regions, and the traditional rohe and inter-relationships of Ngati Porou, Ngai Tamanuhiri, Rongowhakataa, Te Aitanga a Mahaki and Kahungunu ki te Wairoa. Its vision is that by 2011 it will be meeting the region's skill needs and sharing the region's expertise with the world. Tairāwhiti Polytechnic "will be strongly engaged with students, other education providers, business, industry, iwi organisations and the social agencies that make up the Tairāwhiti community through our commitment to a relationship-based Whare Tāhū¹ way of operating. Students will graduate empowered to reach their full potential and be 'work ready' to apply their learning or carry on studying."

Tairāwhiti Polytechnic's Strategic Plan 2007-2011 sets out the broad direction of the Polytechnic over the medium term within the context of the Government's policies and priorities. The Plan draws on regional needs analyses prepared by a variety of local and national agencies and on the results of a major staff, student and public consultation exercise. The conceptual strategic goals of the Strategic Plan have been developed into more specific statements in the document "Strategic Intentions 2009-2013", which forms the basis of the Polytechnic's 2009-2010 Investment Plan. Underpinning planned activities for the next four years include:

- Employing quality people
- Improving the financial situation
- Working cooperatively within the education networks in the Tairāwhiti region
- Cooperation with other providers
- Expanding service flexibility
- Campus reconfiguration and raising classroom standards
- Utilising technology as an enabler

At time of the last full audit in August 2007, Tairāwhiti Polytechnic was under crown management and in the process of a major restructuring which resulted in 40 staff being made redundant. Since then, the governance and management of Polytechnic have undergone considerable change, and the Polytechnic is on track for crown management to be concluded by the end of 2008. Twelve of the fourteen current Council members took up their responsibilities during the past year, a new Chief Executive (Judy Campbell) has been appointed, and a new Executive Team established.

Tairāwhiti Polytechnic achieved a total of 1,357 EFTS² in 2007, 89% of its target (compared with 1,711 EFTS achieved in 2006). In 2008 1,237 EFTS are budgeted³ and the approximate EFTS split between the four schools is budgeted as:

¹ Whare Tāhū is a Māori term particular to Tairāwhiti, which refers to the learning houses of this region. At Tairāwhiti Polytechnic, the term also emphasises an approach where relationships are central to the provision of quality education and learning. It is an inclusive framework that encourages the building and fostering of interconnectedness of relationships within the organisation and externally with business, industry and the community.

² Equivalent Full Time Students

³ Includes MOE Version 2 budget of 1,089 EFTS

- Humanities 275
- Business, Computing and Foundation 210
- Rural and Trades 391
- Papatoa 361

In 2007, about 57% of the students enrolled in formal qualification programmes were Māori, compared with the 2006 census result which showed that Māori made up 44.4% of the total population of the Gisborne region.

The Polytechnic delivers one degree programme (first offered at the beginning of 2007), eight Diploma programmes, about fifty Certificate programmes and about ten Training Opportunities and Youth Training Programmes. Compared with other institutes of technology and polytechnics, Tairāwhiti Polytechnic has a particularly high proportion of levels 1-4 certificate programmes. In 2008, the Polytechnic is likely to deliver about 80 Adult and Community Education (ACE) EFTS.

The main campus of the Polytechnic is based in central Gisborne. The Rural Studies campus is also in Gisborne, about three kilometres from the main campus. There are currently nineteen teaching sites for the Certificate in Cable Logging Level 4 (delivering about 360 EFTS) scattered throughout the North Island. Most of the Training Opportunities and Youth Training Programmes are offered from teaching sites in Ruatōrea (about 60 EFTS) and Napier (about 30 EFTS). The National Certificate in Horticulture (Introduction) Level 2 is being offered from teaching sites in four rural communities.

The Polytechnic is a member of the Tertiary Education Alliance, which has been working in several areas including the harmonization of programme approval processes, flexible delivery and primary industries programme development.

At the time of the audit, a due diligence process was underway which, if successful, will lead to the transfer of the Papatoa School to Te Wananga o Aotearoa from January 2009 onwards, with a transition period of six months.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

The last full audit of Tairāwhiti Polytechnic was conducted in August 2007 by ITP Quality in accordance with NZQA's delegation of powers under Section 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989. Acting on the recommendation of the audit team, the ITP Quality Board extended Tairāwhiti Polytechnic's Quality Assured Status for one year from November 2007 when a further full audit would be conducted.

This audit was conducted against the twelve ITP New Zealand Academic Quality Standards over three days in November 2008. A team of four ITP Quality academic auditors sampled eight programmes of study and ACE courses. Tairāwhiti Polytechnic's support services were also audited.

Overall the audit team found that Tairāwhiti Polytechnic has moved on significantly since the time of the 2007 ITP Quality Audit visit, which occurred in the middle of a substantial

restructuring that resulted in many staff redundancies. The new CE and senior management team, supported by a new Council, have worked hard to address the challenges arising out of the serious situation the Polytechnic found itself in. During this audit the ITP Quality team found that the level of commitment, capability and positiveness of staff throughout Tairāwhiti Polytechnic was impressive.

As a result of the interviews conducted and evidence collected during this audit, the team is confident that Tairāwhiti Polytechnic has identified the key issues that need to be addressed in order to improve the quality of the students' learning experiences, and staff were found to be in the process of addressing these issues. However, it will be some time before an objective evaluation can be made of the effectiveness of the actions being taken and those planned for implementation in 2009.

Many key staff were not in place until the middle of 2008. Partly as a result, there were significant delays in the implementation of the agreed corrective actions to address issues identified during the 2007 audit, and the quality management system (QMS) review has not yet been completed. The 2008 audit team found evidence that all of the other 2007 audit corrective actions and recommendations have been addressed. However, because of the delays, the team was not able to fully evaluate the effectiveness of some of the actions taken.

Tairāwhiti Polytechnic is clearly committed to maintaining high standards of excellence in education and training, with due concern for the public interest and the wellbeing of students attending the institution.

The Polytechnic is committed to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the audit team found evidence of this commitment at both strategic and operational levels of the organisation.

Tairāwhiti Polytechnic has sound, effective processes for the development, approval and review of its qualifications, programmes and courses. Stakeholders are regularly consulted, and are involved in the development and review of programme outcomes. The new processes used to identify and allocate financial, administrative, human and physical resources should ensure that programme and course outcomes are achieved and health and safety requirements are met.

New staff appraisal and development processes have been developed and are being implemented effectively. Admission processes are effective and a comprehensive range of student support services is provided.

Tairāwhiti Polytechnic's teaching and learning practices are educationally sound and appropriate to the programmes of study. Off-site workplace components are effective and integrated into curricula. Assessment and moderation systems ensure the fair, valid and consistent assessment of student achievement, and reporting and certification systems meet the requirements of students and external stakeholders.

Institution-wide support mechanisms for research are being established. When fully implemented, these mechanisms should provide adequate support for research staff teaching on Te Toi o Ngā Rangi (Bachelor of Māori Visual Arts).

Internal academic audits, and improvements arising from such audits are being effectively managed.

Three areas of good practice were highlighted by the auditors:

- The staff induction booklet which contains comprehensive information regarding most aspects of the Polytechnic, and is well laid out and easy to follow
- Staff development learning sets including “Developing Managers at Tairāwhiti” and “Strategy for Achieving Excellence in Teaching and Learning”
- The easy to follow step-by-step guides developed to assist staff with processing academic results and reporting award outcomes

Eleven recommendations were made and these are summarized below:

- That record management systems are reviewed
- That a risk management plan is developed and approved
- That web information is included in the Key Programme Information Guide checklist as a consistency safeguard for the future
- That student information relating to complaints is revised to ensure that contact details of how to access the Tertiary Ombudsman are included
- That the provision of supplementary information for international students is coordinated with other official publications to ensure a consistent approach
- That all information sources related to compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students are subjected to a compliance audit
- (i) That strategies being implemented by the Academic Quality team are extended to manage and monitor internal and external moderation processes of those unit standards externally moderated by ITOs; and
(ii) That these strategies are extended to include internal moderation of those assessments that do not have external standards setting bodies
- That a concerted effort is made to strengthen assessment and moderation activities throughout the Polytechnic
- That effective safeguards are put in place for the storage of student information offsite
- That outstanding actions identified through internal audits are completed as soon as possible
- (i) That the responsibilities for various aspects of the QMS Review process are clarified;
(ii) That all policies and procedures are converted to a common format, with consistent document control and labelling, prior to final approval;
(iii) That the QMS is considered from the perspective of the emerging outcomes and value focussed SAEER quality assurance system, and amended where appropriate;
(iv) That the new draft policies and procedures are approved and implemented as soon as possible, including training on such for all staff; and
(v) That the final outcome of the Review is an integrated, consistent and comprehensive set of management systems covering all aspects of the Polytechnic’s operation.

The audit team concluded that Tairāwhiti Polytechnic has met all twelve ITP New Zealand Academic Quality Standards. This conclusion is based on the good work that was found to be in progress. However, it will be sometime before the effectiveness of much of this work can be fully evaluated. The audit team therefore recommended that the ITP Quality Board extend the Polytechnic’s Quality Assured Status for two years and that a full external evaluation and review is conducted at the end of this period.

BOARD DECISION (9 February 2009)

That Tairāwhiti Polytechnic's Quality Assured Status be awarded for a further period of two years, consistent with ITP Quality requirements.