

**Institutes of Technology and
Polytechnics Quality**
Mana Kounga ä-Pütahi Hangarau, ä-Kuratini

Academic Audit
Summary Report

Aoraki Polytechnic
(October 2006)



INTRODUCTION:

The Aoraki Polytechnic Profile 2006 – 2008 shows a primary goal of the Institution is to increase capability and flexibility so as to be the community cornerstone contributor of high quality education and training programmes, to be achieved through local, regional and national provision with emphasis on sound planning, continuous evaluation and improvement of performance.

Aoraki Polytechnic is committed to providing programmes and courses which meet specified and measurable quality standards. This commitment is underpinned by the Polytechnic's adoption of the ITP New Zealand Academic Quality Standards as the basis for their Quality Management System (QMS).

The Polytechnic achieved 3,433 EFTS in 2005 which was more than 700 EFTS below the target figure. This is attributed to TEC funding policy decisions and the retrenchment has continued in 2006 wherein the forecast is for only 2,400 EFTS, representing about 30,000 individual students, some of whom will have multiple enrolments. The Polytechnic is being put under increasing pressure by TEC to limit its delivery options to the Mid-Canterbury, South Canterbury, Waimate and Waitaki regions, The Polytechnic has submitted transition plans in response to this policy direction. Whilst some assurances have been received from TEC in regard to funding in 2007 and 2008 there remains considerable uncertainty which is making planning for 2007 difficult within a constantly-reducing timeframe.

There are approximately 500 EFTS at the main Timaru campus, 162 at the Dunedin campus, 130 at the Christchurch campus, and 114 at Ashburton (about 50% of which are ACE). The Polytechnic works co-operatively with Otago Polytechnic and CPIT to maintain campuses in Dunedin and Christchurch with agreements in place that avoid duplication and unhelpful competition in programme delivery. Aoraki Polytechnic has taken over the Oamaru campus of Otago Polytechnic with the latter continuing some agreed delivery on site until the end of 2006.

Aoraki has a further 1500 EFTS around the country in the form of Joint Education Programmes (JEPs) and ACE courses. Included in the JEP portfolio are some 670 EFTS delivered through Agribusiness franchises and administered from their Head Office in Invercargill. It seems likely that Aoraki interests will, in the longer term, be limited to the central South Island, where there are franchises currently operating out of Christchurch, Ashburton and Timaru. Aoraki has a 15% shareholding in Agribusiness Training Ltd (ABT) and believes their geographic position in the centre of the South Island puts them in a sound position to service dairying and irrigation training along with core land-based skills. During 2005, in collaboration with ABT, Aoraki developed a new local qualification, the Certificate in Land Based Skills. This qualification provides a vehicle for learners to gradually develop a range of skills and competencies so that they may be useful and productive workers in the rural sector.

The Aoraki Profile describes the regional background to the Polytechnic's strategic planning. Central to this is the Polytechnic's commitment to the rural sector and the needs of secondary industries and the provision of short and focussed training opportunities. Related initiatives have been supported by Business Links Funding grants of \$300,000 in both 2006 and 2007.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

The Polytechnic's projected count of equivalent full-time students in 2006 is 2400, of which approximately 60% are delivered in partnership with other organisations. A significant number of

these partnerships, delivered from remote sites in both the North and South Islands, were included in the audit sample. The Audit Team found that the Polytechnic places considerable emphasis on the quality assurance of these Joint Education Programmes (JEPs) and a number of good practices were identified in the course of the Audit. An example of good practice was the encouragement given to JEP partners to work within their own Quality Management System but to map the QMS against that of Aoraki to ensure congruence. In some areas, notably HR practices and meaningful industry relationships, the Audit Team considered that conformance with the QMS was better illustrated in the partnerships than it was in the mainstream Aoraki programmes which were sampled.

A primary goal of Aoraki Polytechnic is to increase capability and flexibility so as to be the community cornerstone contributor of high quality education and training programmes, and to achieve this through local, regional and national provision underpinned by sound planning, continuous evaluation and improvement of performance. The Audit confirmed that the Polytechnic has deservedly earned a good reputation in all quarters in its pursuit of this goal.

Moderation is the tool by which a teaching institution can establish benchmarks that ensure that students are assessed fairly and consistently and graduates are genuinely meeting industry standards. There has been a considerable emphasis placed on moderation over the past two years for which the Auditors commended the Polytechnic. The staff spoken to clearly understood the importance of moderation and were able to provide evidence of both formal and informal moderation taking place on a regular basis. In fact several of the Auditors commented that the quality of moderation documentation, and the obvious substance of what lay below it, was as good as they had seen anywhere.

Three instances requiring “corrective” actions were found during the Audit. All were considered to be of low risk to student learning. One sought actions that will ensure the Polytechnic’s procedures for the recognition of prior learning are followed consistently. Another, identified actions that will ensure all published information about a particular programme is consistent with what has been approved by the Academic Board. Most importantly, the Auditors believe that the Polytechnic needs to institute procedures that will maintain programme documentation that is current and incorporates all the changes approved by the Academic Board in the period of time since the programme was first developed and approved. Such documentation must:

- be the exact and inarguable source of all key conditions applying to any programme being delivered by the Polytechnic, and
- be in the hands of the front line staff charged with delivering the programme and assessing the learning outcomes.

It is the Auditors’ recommendation to the ITP Quality Board that the award of on-going quality assured status should be conditional upon the Polytechnic submitting the detail of how it intends to address the issue of programme documentation, together with a commitment to its implementation.

The Auditors made some ten recommendations for the Polytechnic’s consideration. A sample of these is summarised below:

- Ongoing training in Treaty and bicultural awareness should be made available to all staff
- Triennial programme reviews should clearly identify whether industry is in agreement that students at the point of graduation have the capabilities that meet their requirements and, if not, what capabilities need to be strengthened or substituted.

- Accident and incident reporting should be checked as part of the Annual Review of Joint Education Programmes.
- Immediate actions need to be considered that will enable faster downloads for clients on “dial up” studying the FarmSmart programme using e-learning methodology.
- In programmes incorporating work experience the credit value assigned to the work experience should be linked to an appropriate method of assessment.

The Audit Team concludes that Aoraki Polytechnic continues to meet ITP New Zealand Academic Quality Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 (Standard 11 was not included in the Audit) and will continue to meet Standard 2 when the Polytechnic submits to the Board of ITP Quality the detail of the remedial project adjudged by ITP Quality to be a satisfactory solution to the issues of concern raised by the Audit Team in relation to Programme Documentation and, further, gives a written commitment to its implementation.

Therefore the audit team recommends that Aoraki Polytechnic’s Quality Assured status be continued for a period of four (4) years subject to the Polytechnic submitting to ITP Quality the detail of the remedial project adjudged, by ITP Quality, to be a satisfactory solution to the issues raised by the audit team in relation to programme documentation and a written commitment to its implementation within 3 months.

Further, at the time of the next mid term quality review the Evaluators be asked to report specifically on the effectiveness of the remedial measures introduced by the Polytechnic to assure the integrity of programme documentation.

ITP Quality Board decision (2 April 2007)

The ITP Quality Board sought a response from Aoraki Polytechnic regarding the timeline for meeting the programme documentation project detailed above. The ITP Quality Board was satisfied with the response from Aoraki Polytechnic that it would address this matter before the end of 2007. This satisfied the Board that Aoraki Polytechnic had now met standard 2. The Board therefore considered that a formal response by the end of February 2008 would be an appropriate time to assess the outcomes of this project, and that the ITP Quality mid-term review evaluation team, set for October 2008, would be asked to report to the ITP Quality Board on the effectiveness of the project.

Therefore, on this basis the ITP Quality Board decided that Aoraki Polytechnic be awarded Quality Assured status for a further four years, consistent with ITP Quality requirements and subject to the Polytechnic submitting to ITP Quality by 28th February 2008 a report on the programme documentation issues and what outcomes have been achieved.