



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report

Equilibrium by Elite Limited trading
as Evolution School of Beauty,
Massage and Spa

Date of report: 10 April 2024

About Equilibrium by Elite Limited trading as Evolution School of Beauty, Massage and Spa

Evolution School of Beauty, Massage and Spa is a small niche training provider offering programmes in makeup and skincare, beauty, massage and spa to students in the northern region of New Zealand/Aotearoa. Most staff are Evolution graduates with strong roots in their community.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	115 Lower Cameron Street, Whangarei
Eligible to enrol intl students:	No
Number of students:	<p>Domestic: 49 students across all programmes – Certificate in Makeup and Skincare (Level 3) (14 students); Certificate in Beauty Therapy (Level 4) (29); Diploma in Wellness and Relaxation Massage (Level 5) (six)</p> <p>Non Māori/Non Pasifika 89 per cent, Māori 76 per cent, Pasifika 12 per cent, students with a disability not identified. Around 50 per cent of students identify with more than one ethnicity.</p> <p>International: nil</p>
Number of staff:	Full-time: three tutors, one administration person plus the director, quality assurance lead contractor, external moderator, Far North ambassador, Whangarei rohe ambassador
TEO profile:	<p>See NZQA: Equilibrium by Elite Ltd</p> <p>Significant changes since the last EER include: external quality assurance from International Therapist Examination Council UK ceased from the end of 2021; two external moderators have been engaged; work has commenced on new assessment</p>

	<p>packages for all programmes; development of e-learning initiatives, including fully remote online student support; NZQA approval to deliver the Certificate in Makeup and Skincare (Level 3); appointment of two new tutors; re-engaging with secondary schools to provide pathways to tertiary education study.</p>
Last EER outcome:	Highly Confident in both educational performance and capability in self-assessment
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate in Makeup and Skincare (Level 3) (ID:128004) • Certificate in Beauty Therapy (Level 4) (ID:126494)
MoE number:	7902
NZQA reference:	C56038
Dates of the virtual EER:	15 and 16 February 2024

Summary of results

Evolution provides quality training programmes that meet the needs of at-risk, mostly female Māori learners, many of whom are disengaged from education. Employers gain graduates with positive attitudes and the capability to learn. Self-assessment is used to make improvements to teaching and learning.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Evolution meets the most important educational needs of the students, employers, the community and government agencies over time.
- For 2020-22, qualification completions across all programmes offered were 89, 67 and 93 per cent respectively. These results are exemplary given the demographic of at-risk learners.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Students attain academic and personal goals that enable them to take increasing responsibility for their work and personal lives.
- Exceptional pastoral support, highly committed staff, clear values and an aspirational strategic vision enhance student wellbeing. Individuals, whānau and communities are developed and advanced.
- Governance and management are effective at supporting educational achievement, with 2024 enrolment numbers now at pre-Covid levels.
- NZQA's consistency review and programme monitoring report were a catalyst to review systems for evidence-gathering, to contract in expertise, and to engage proactively with NZQA.
- Equilibrium has made recent staff appointments to increase both capacity and capability in quality assurance. Self-assessment is effective but not yet fully embedded across all academic staff (see Recommendation).

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Evolution is a niche provider offering programmes in makeup and skincare, beauty and massage. The PTE had low student numbers over 2020-23. Tutors know the students well. The campus culture is inclusive, respectful and whānau-based. Evolution provides a caring, safe place for students to learn and develop personally. Half of all students are Māori.</p> <p>Evolution analyses data by programme, gender, Māori/Pasifika and learners with a disability. The PTE understands the reasons for student withdrawals and deferrals and works to ensure students are supported to complete their courses and gain qualifications. Some students complete several programmes with Evolution. Some students are offered work prior to graduation. Employers contact Evolution to fill staff vacancies.</p> <p>For 2020-22, across all programmes offered, qualification completions were 89, 67 and 93 per cent respectively. Course completions were 75, 52 and 91 per cent. The drop in course completions in 2021 related to the impact of Covid and students' family responsibilities. On specific programmes such as massage and nails, Māori student success is higher than non-Māori. Generally, Māori students achieve on par.</p> <p>Evolution gathers achievement data and contacts graduates six months post-graduation to determine whether and how they are using their qualification. This data is analysed by programme, ethnicity and students</p>

¹ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

	<p>with disabilities. The data is discussed at monthly staff meetings and informs programme review.</p> <p>Students apply new skills at clinic days on site. Clinics provide free treatments for friends and whānau. Evolution graduates can also get free treatments at the on-site clinics indefinitely. Evolution provides free treatment days for local community groups such as Women's Refuge, retirement villages and disadvantaged youth. Employers prefer Evolution graduates as they are well presented, have a positive attitude and, as locals, are more likely to stay in the region for employment.</p> <p>Students gain skills and attributes such as improved personal presentation, punctuality, self-confidence, pride and increased self-esteem. Curriculum vitae writing, interview techniques, literacy and industry-based communication skills also improve. Enrolments in 2024 are now at pre-Covid levels, a testament to Evolution's determination and strategic direction.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Students complete courses and/or gain qualifications as a direct outcome of the highly supportive, student-centred, whānau-based learning environment. Staff share core values that ensure students feel respected and safe. This enables at-risk students to successfully manage their study and personal lives. Students develop professionally and personally, adding value for them, their whānau, employers and communities.</p>

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Learning environments are structured for the benefit and needs of students. A large percentage of students are single parents looking for a flexible career where they can work around their children's needs. Programmes provided by Evolution meet this need well – a graduate can be self-employed and work from home part-time. Online learning</p>

	<p>and online support provide further flexibility for students, particularly for those in remote rural communities.</p> <p>Programmes are offered on site for three days a week, alongside online completion of tasks. A dedicated online support tutor is available to students for the parts of their programme completed off campus. This tutor also works alongside the classroom tutor to provide individual support when required. Learning activities, including role play, ice breakers and online quizzes, are effective at engaging the students.</p> <p>Students have access to a results grid (updated weekly) on a shared drive where they can see their results and check their progress at any time. This encourages students to monitor and take greater responsibility for their own progress, a vital life and work skill. Student progress towards their self-identified academic and personal goals is reviewed with a tutor each month (or more often if required) and updated. Where issues are identified, Evolution organises an individual learning plan or extra tuition.</p> <p>Student assessment accommodates identified student needs. Assessments can be visual, oral or written, reducing barriers to success. Resits are available. Informal, daily tutor contact ensures a proactive approach to student needs, both academic and personal. Regular programme review occurs after each intake. The review is wide-ranging and includes discussion of resources, rates of withdrawal, assessments and destination data.</p> <p>Assessment is mostly valid and appropriate. However, in 2021 a consistency review of the New Zealand Certificate in Nail Technology found that Evolution could not provide sufficient evidence that graduates' skills and knowledge aligned with the certificate's graduate profile outcomes.</p> <p>In 2023, an NZQA programme monitoring report for the New Zealand Diploma in Wellness and Relaxation Massage (Level 5) found that Evolution had not effectively applied its own assessment and moderation policies to this programme. Overall, the monitor's report noted that the teachers were qualified but their capability in assessment and moderation needed to be strengthened. Evolution also needed to address significant issues with the assessment materials, methodology and qualification level.</p>
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	<p>Evolution has used these non-compliances to make changes and improvements. These include developing internal capability, rewriting assessments, and regular pre-assessment moderation of all programmes. Internal moderation includes cross-marking, and assessor judgements are usually consistent. The appointment of two experienced external moderators, development of an external moderation plan and contracting a quality assurance manager have also added capacity and capability.</p> <p>The International Therapist Examination Council UK is no longer part of the quality assurance process for Evolution. Ongoing support for new staff in the purpose and importance of moderation for maintaining academic standards would be beneficial (see Recommendation).</p> <p>While Evolution does not have a formal advisory board, it is well established and known in the sector and seeks advice from relevant stakeholders on an 'as-needs' basis. Regular consultation with suppliers of beauty products and employers keeps the PTE current with trends and industry changes. Guest speakers also contribute to the training, maintaining industry relevance.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Programme design and delivery matches the needs of students and employers well. Recent additional expertise in academic quality assurance contributes to greater confidence that assessment is valid and consistent across all programmes offered.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Student support at Evolution is exceptional. Evolution selects and inducts students thoroughly. Tutors guide new students through enrolment, and together they establish goals which are regularly monitored and reviewed to support the students' academic and personal progress and wellbeing. Evolution effectively engages all staff and external support agencies in the provision of individualised and comprehensive support.</p> <p>Responses to the wellbeing needs of students are appropriate, targeted and practical. Examples include visits by a sexual health nurse each term, providing free female hygiene products and free fruit and snacks. Students receive general information on mental health. Activities such as wellness Wednesdays and motivational Mondays include a range of activities, such as yoga and meditation. Students have access to washing machines and dryers on site.</p> <p>The learning environment is inclusive. Rest and social spaces on campus are shared by staff and students which promotes conversation and informal feedback. Evolution is embedded in its community. It is held in high regard by employers and a wide range of community and social service organisations.</p> <p>Students have opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts. These include on-site clinic days and community events where students interact with diverse members of the public. Student feedback is well developed and dynamic. Evidence includes regular opportunities to give feedback on programmes and tutors, class representatives who attend staff meetings, and quick responses to issues identified by students.</p> <p>The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 attestation, required annually by NZQA, included a comprehensive review and action plan items for ongoing improvements to pastoral care outcomes.</p>

Conclusion:	Student support is highly effective. The generosity, quality and extent of this support enables students to be involved in their learning and is the key contributor to student success.
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1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Evolution has comprehensive business and strategic plans that outline the organisation's purpose and direction clearly. Leadership at Evolution is committed, strong and collaborative. Staff are highly valued and loyal. Resources are allocated to support teaching and learning. Evolution has recently revamped the campus which is welcoming, clean and hygienic. New tutors are carefully selected to ensure they have the skills and attributes to relate well to students and contribute effectively to Evolution's values and strategic direction.</p> <p>Evolution has refocused on Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) programmes in secondary schools. Visits to schools, and schools visiting Evolution help to make prospective students feel safe and welcome prior to enrolment. Two staff, called ambassadors, have been appointed to lead the secondary schools' initiatives. There are now 18 students in the Far North keen to do the level 3 Certificate in Makeup and Skincare in 2024. Consequently, Evolution is considering opening a campus in Kaitia if uptake continues.</p> <p>Organisational academic leadership has been strengthened by the contracting in of three key staff – two external moderators and a quality assurance manager. Data analysis is ongoing and used to inform changes and improvements.</p>
Conclusion:	Governance and management are committed and involved in all aspects of the training at Evolution. The PTE effectively balances innovation, responsiveness and continuity. It operates a sustainable business model, which is aligned to its educational purpose.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The appointment of a contracted quality assurance manager has been highly beneficial to the management of important compliance obligations. It has freed up the owner's time to focus on the school's strategic direction, including new initiatives to increase enrolments.</p> <p>Evolution's compliance management processes align with the beauty industry's code of ethics and meet NZQA and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) requirements. Evolution's policies and practices are legal and ethical. Compliance with NZQA is consistent: student fee protection with the Public Trust; conducting an annual SFP audit; an annual financials audit; annual statutory declaration; public complaints procedure; up-to-date Code attestation; and NZQA approvals and accreditations to deliver programmes.</p> <p>Evolution meets the funding conditions set out by the TEC to maintain annual approvals and funding. Workforce development council endorsements are current, attendance registers are maintained, student information is kept for four years, and tax obligations are met. Evolution complies with the Employment Relations Act 2000. Membership of ITENZ² supports Evolution with reminders and workshops around compliance obligations.</p> <p>Company resolutions are minuted in accounts, employment agreements and trial periods for staff and memoranda of understanding are in place with contractors, consultants and other stakeholders. Evolution has recently had a health and safety expert conduct an audit of the workplace and has updated its health and safety manual. Compliance is a standing item at monthly staff meetings. Non-compliant outcomes for several NZQA activities impact the rating for this key evaluation question (see 1.3 for details).</p>
Conclusion:	Evolution has effective compliance management processes. Relevant legislation, rules and regulations are complied with. The recently contracted quality assurance manager

² Independent Tertiary Education New Zealand

	has added capability and capacity to the management of compliance.
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Focus areas

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

2.1 Certificate in Makeup and Skincare (Level 3) (ID:128004)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Evolution noted that a number of potential students were not engaging because their entry-level programme was at level 4. The PTE sought and received NZQA approval to deliver the level 3 Certificate in Makeup and Skincare. This enabled the students to start at a lower-level entry point. It also gave them recognition of prior learning should they want to continue to the level 4 Certificate in Beauty Therapy.</p> <p>The first cohort graduated in 2024. Of five enrolments, three completed, a completion rate of 60 per cent. One graduate has gone on to further study and has enrolled with Evolution in the Certificate in Beauty Therapy, and another is currently not working. The third graduate said small student numbers undermined the effectiveness of the training as there were fewer opportunities to practise the skills learnt.</p> <p>Managing student expectations for this six-month programme is ongoing. It is a qualification for working in retail, for example on a beauty counter. It is not a qualification as a makeup artist, as some students expect. The second intake (February 2024) has 14 enrolments, with nine attending on day one.</p>
Conclusion:	The first programme review indicates that the certificate is meeting student needs well and that educational performance is generally strong but not exceptional.

2.2 Certificate in Beauty Therapy (Level 4) (ID:126494)

Performance:	Good																				
Self-assessment:	Good																				
	<p>The Certificate in Beauty Therapy has had 49 graduates over the last four years. Employers value these graduates. The NZQA consistency review in 2021 showed that Evolution understands the qualification outcomes and that their graduates meet these outcomes.</p> <p>Covid lockdowns affected the progress of some students over this evaluation period. Northland was impacted when Auckland was in lockdown, as they were cut off from the rest of the country. Students' personal circumstances, vaccination status, family obligations and deferrals also contributed to delays in course completions.</p> <p>Table 1. Certificate in Beauty Therapy (Level 4) enrolments, completion numbers and course completion percentages 2020-23</p> <table><tr><th>Years</th><th>Enrolment numbers</th><th>Completions</th><th>Percentage of course completions</th></tr><tr><td>2020</td><td>26</td><td>19</td><td>73%</td></tr><tr><td>2021</td><td>16</td><td>13</td><td>81%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>21</td><td>8</td><td>38%</td></tr><tr><td>2023</td><td>17</td><td>9</td><td>53%</td></tr></table> <p>2022 was a poor year in terms of course completions as not all students completed in the designated time. Evolution granted extensions and deferrals to some students because of medical or family issues. In 2023, there were three students on extensions from 2022 and one student extended for six months. These students have now successfully completed.</p> <p>2023 was another difficult year for Evolution as students were reluctant to enrol post-Covid, there was 'election year hesitancy', and a number of students became pregnant and needed to return to work to support their families. There was also increased drug, alcohol and gang activity, all of which impacted the students' ability to study.</p>	Years	Enrolment numbers	Completions	Percentage of course completions	2020	26	19	73%	2021	16	13	81%	2022	21	8	38%	2023	17	9	53%
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	There are 29 enrolments for the first intake of the Certificate in Beauty Therapy in 2024.
Conclusion:	Evolution understands its student demographic well. Many students have significant barriers to educational success. Highly effective individual student support ensures that students have the opportunity to complete their study and graduate.

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that Equilibrium by Elite Limited consider:

- Upskilling new staff to increase their capability in assessment design and moderation to strengthen their overall academic understanding and inform teaching practice.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud³*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

³ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, training schemes and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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