

Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality

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Academic Audit

Summary Report

Whitireia Community Polytechnic

(June 2006)



INTRODUCTION:

This report presents a summary of the findings of the second full audit of the Whitireia Community Polytechnic (Whitireia) by ITP Quality in accordance with NZQA's delegation of powers under Section 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989.

The academic quality audit that has been undertaken at Whitireia is the second full audit carried out by the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality). The first one, in November 2001, resulted in the recommendation to ITP Quality that Whitireia be awarded quality assured status. The Mid-Term Quality Review in June 2004 recommended confirmation of this status. The audit team which visited Whitireia for this 2006 academic audit received full documentation prior to the visit, and was provided with all additional documents and resources requested during the four-day visit. The major documents sighted, and people or groups interviewed, are listed within Appendix A.

The quality philosophy of Whitireia is set out within its goals and objectives, which are found within its Profile (2006-2008), embodied within the quality management system (QMS) and reported on within the Annual Reports. The primary goal is to deliver top quality, nationally-recognised applied vocational qualifications which will lead to employment or further study for its graduates. The programmes are delivered on four campuses: the main campus at Porirua, and smaller campuses in Auckland, Wellington and Kapiti. Each campus has a particular portfolio of programmes, with the majority of international students in Auckland, and a significant proportion of mature students across all campuses. Another particular feature of Whitireia is its multicultural focus, with a stated goal of being "recognised as a leading provider of tertiary education for multicultural communities and in achieving equity of educational and equal employment opportunities" (Goal 3). In determining whether this goal, and the other goals of Whitireia with respect to quality of education delivery are being met, Whitireia keeps completion and success statistics for all programmes across all campuses. The audit team commended Whitireia for the details recorded within this data, and for the use of the data in programme evaluation and implementation of improvements to its quality system.

The 2005 Annual Report (draft version, March 2006) reported that in 2005 there were over 4459 EFTS at Whitireia. Although the goal had been to achieve 5000 EFTS in 2005 (Goal 1), it was noted that student numbers were lower than expected at most Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs), possibly because of the strengthening labour market, and the overall fall in international student numbers. The completion and success statistics of Whitireia has allowed it to identify those programmes which are no longer sustainable in terms of EFTS, and to make appropriate management decisions. At the same time, it has allowed Whitireia to introduce new programmes where a need has been identified. For example, the Bachelor of Applied Arts was approved in 2005, to build upon a number of already successful programmes in the applied arts field.

During the four days of the audit, the audit team also considered Whitireia's compliance with the new (and still draft) criteria for quality of foundation programmes (the FLQA standard). Whitireia had agreed to be one of a number of trial auditees for this standard, on the agreed understanding that any findings in relation to the FLQA (Foundation Learning Quality Assurance) trial audit would not be included as findings in the ITP Quality academic audit. A programme was selected for the trial audit, and was considered against the draft FLQA standards. The programme, Certificate in Foundation Education, was considered on the same day that two of the auditors were within the Faculty of Health, Education and Social Sciences. A separate report has been written for this trial audit. However, it is reported here that there were no findings which in any way contradict the

overall findings of the academic audit, and several of the commendations also apply to delivery of the foundation programme.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

The audit team commended Whitireia for a number of instances of particular effectiveness in ensuring academic quality. In particular, there was clear evidence throughout the audit of the integration of the QMS throughout all activities of the polytechnic. For example, Academic Programme Evaluation Reports contribute to the data collected regarding course completion and success, incorporate the feedback from all stakeholders, and any recommendations for improvements or action are followed through a formal process, involving the Academic Board. Other areas where particular effectiveness was noted included the systems for involving Advisory Committees in their respective programmes, and the commitment to student support across the polytechnic. The audit team was impressed by Whitireia's Learning and Teaching policy on programme delivery, which has provided a clear and workable definition of good teaching practice, and which is widely referred to throughout the polytechnic.

Three instances of corrective actions required were found during the audit, each one deemed to be of low risk to student learning. The ITP accepted these findings when they were reported in the closing meeting of the audit, and will implement appropriate corrective actions. The corrective actions required concerned the need for Whitireia to document and submit to ITP Quality, for its consideration, programmes using on-line or distance education, according to its own policy regarding this; the need for Whitireia to consistently carry out documentation of its health and safety policies across the institution; and the need to consistently implement its internal moderation policy. Whitireia have responded to ITP Quality detailing a timeline for implementing the corrective actions.

In addition, the audit team made six recommendations for improved practice. The six recommendations within the report were concerned with:

- the improvement of standard practice in defining compulsory and optional courses for all programmes (within Standard 2);
- the process by which all ITP Quality and polytechnic criteria for approval of new programmes, and changes to existing programmes, are documented prior to approval by the Academic Board or delegated authority (within Standard 2);
- the implementation of Whitireia's policy concerning entry of mature students (Standard 5);
- advice to staff and students concerning the need to carry insurance for significant personal items brought onto campus for study purposes, such as musical instruments (Standard 6);
- the reconsideration of the categories of research within Whitireia policy (Standard 11);
- continuing the development of strategies for ensuring that research is built into the formal workload and staffing allocation for degree programmes (Standard 11).

The audit team has recommended to the ITP Quality Board that the Quality Assured status of Whitireia Community Polytechnic be awarded for a further period of 4 years.

ITP Quality Board Decision (12 June 2006)

That Whitireia Community Polytechnic be awarded Quality Assured Status for a further four years, consistent with ITP Quality requirements.