

## Summary of the 2024 Academic Audit of Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki Lincoln University

### Academic audit

Academic audits are part of the external quality assurance arrangements for universities in Aotearoa New Zealand. They are the only external quality assurance process that takes a holistic view of a university's teaching, learning, student support and student outcomes.

Universities in Aotearoa New Zealand are in their sixth cycle of academic audit, which has two main phases. From 2017–2020, universities undertook an enhancement theme focusing on access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori and Pacific students.

The second phase is an audit against a framework of 30 guideline statements. Universities undertake a self-assessment against this framework and present a self-review report and supporting evidence for a panel to consider.

The audit panel comprises senior academics or academic managers in Aotearoa New Zealand, a Māori panel member, a Pacific panel member (where possible), an international panel member and a student or recent graduate

### Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki Lincoln University

Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki Lincoln University was established in 1878 as the first dedicated agricultural college in the southern hemisphere. It received university status in 1990 and the use of the name Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki (approved by the first Kaumatua of the University, Rōpata Wahawaha Stirling). The University is still a specialist, land-based university, located on a campus next to the township of Lincoln in Canterbury. Its campus teaching and research facilities are augmented by seven farms and other land holdings and a growing online presence.

The University's engagement with Mana Whenua is set out in a 2006 He Tutohinga Whakamatau Charter of Understanding with Te Taumutu Rūnanga, which acknowledges a broader Te Tiriti o Waitangi relationship with Kāi Tahu through Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.

Internationally, the University is a partner member of the Euroleague for Life Sciences and the Global Challenges University Alliance 2030. It is ranked 362 in the QS World University Rankings 2024 with a global ranking of 62 for international faculty.

The University's vision "to be a globally ranked, top-five land-based University, unlocking the power of the land to enhance lives and grow the future" is set out in a 10-year strategy (2019-2028). Six goals, grouped into a renewal strategy and a shaping strategy, have been developed to pursue this vision. The goals aligned with the renewal strategy are:

1. a distinctive Aotearoa New Zealand end-to-end student experience
2. improved assets and sustainable operating models
3. a culture that stimulates and inspires staff and students.

The shaping strategy has the following goals:

4. a world-class research and teaching precinct
5. an organisation focused on meaningful partnerships
6. facilitating growth.

The strategies and goals in turn are supported by four plans: research, education, Māori and partnerships. At the time of the audit, the University is mid-way through a 10-year strategy and is updating the priorities and progress indicators associated with each goal and merging the research and education plans into an academic plan.

Two further documents important in guiding the work of the University are its Learner Success Framework (Manaaki Tauira) (also part of 'Moving Forward') and its Disability Action Plan. While alignment can be seen between all plans, the Panel anticipates that the strategic update will strengthen the coherence between the University strategy and plans and frameworks developed for other purposes.

The Panel considers the most important areas for further work are:

- growing the numbers of Māori staff, including senior staff, at the University
- progressing the Motu Plan and building associated capacity among Pacific staff
- developing the teaching quality framework so that it can guide further development in online and transnational delivery
- making valid and integrated data available to support monitoring and assess impact of initiatives.

## About this report

While there is some unevenness, overall the Panel considers the University does meet the outcomes and standards a university of good international standing would be expected to demonstrate. It therefore meets the expectations of the Cycle 6 Academic Audit Framework.

## Commendations

Commendations refer to examples of exceptionally good or innovative practice that should produce positive impacts on teaching, learning and student experience. The Panel commends the University for the following areas of good practice:

### Leadership and management of teaching, learning and academic quality

**Taking a relational approach to monitoring student engagement, progress and wellbeing.**

**A commitment to listening to the student voice** — The University is committed to working in partnership with all students and, in particular, establishing co-governance and early engagement approaches.

**Developing teaching and learning environments** — The University has been guided by its cultural narrative and campus master plan in developing and refurbishing buildings and facilities on its campus.

**Developing a SafeLU app** — This enables easy access to emergency contacts and procedures, and can raise issues or concerns and link to other resources. It can also communicate important information, such as whether the campus is open to students and staff in an emergency.

**Supporting the progress of Māori and Pacific students through Te Manutaki, a small, dedicated unit.**

### Student life cycle, support and wellbeing

**Commitment to inclusive education and its Disability Action Plan** — The Plan, part of the Manaaki Taaira programme, is a comprehensive framework to guide University systems, processes and environments in supporting disabled students.

**Commitment to a highly student-centric approach to safety and wellbeing** — This includes its responsibilities under the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021), the range of services available, and the responsiveness of the units that provide those services.

### Curriculum, assessment and delivery

**Ensuring student perspectives are well-represented in programme review processes** — Students and recent graduates are included in academic review processes.

**The centralised approach to managing academic integrity and reporting and communications from the Proctors** — Policies and procedures are updated frequently as new challenges emerge. Both educative and preventative measures are taken as well as detection and response.

### Affirmations

Affirmations refer to initiatives planned or underway that are likely to have a positive impact but are at an early stage with no data yet available to assess impact. The Panel has made affirmations in the following areas:

#### Leadership and management of teaching, learning and academic quality

**Reviewing work-integrated learning (WIL) to ensure consistent access and quality of experience for students** — WIL is identified as a priority area under Goal 1 of the University strategy and the University intends to have a work-integrated learning plan in place for all students.

**Developing an academic governance framework** — This will provide for separation of academic and managerial decision-making, strengthen the standing of academic decision-making and promote consistent decision-making across the University.

**Establishing the Manaaki Taaira programme, the University's Learner Success Plan** — While progress measures for this comprehensive programme show the University is tracking ahead of its targets for Māori students in most measures, finer-grained evaluation and reporting on the impact of individual initiatives for different groups of students would be useful.

### Student life cycle, support and wellbeing

**Developing curated pathways for access for Māori and Pacific students as part of the Manaaki Taaira programme** — Given the relatively low participation rates of Māori and Pacific students at the University, this initiative will be particularly important if the University is to support access for increasing numbers of students who will have studied in kura Kaupapa. Plans for evaluating effectiveness should be included

### Curriculum, assessment and delivery

**The Manaaki Taaira Course Enhancement Programme** — This should help embed a more systematic approach to course and programme monitoring. More work is needed on the way in which elements of the quality assurance will work together and the availability of integrated data for effective monitoring.

**The Assessment Hui** — These were seen as useful. They considered student workload, but not, apparently, student diversity. The University should communicate the outcomes to date and further expectations for this work.

**Planning further guidance on moderation** — Some guidance on benchmarking assessment standards is included in the academic quality framework, but more external validation of assessment outcomes is needed, particularly for taught Master’s degrees.

### Teaching quality

**Developing the Whanake Ake programme (as part of Manaaki Tauira) to address the strategic issue of low numbers of Māori staff** — Similar support and protection may be needed for existing Māori staff and further attention required to attract and retain more senior Māori academic staff.

**Planning to develop a formal teaching development programme aligned with the particular characteristics of teaching at the University** — Resourcing and capacity to develop such a programme may be constrained, along with the capacity of academic staff to be able to take advantage of it. These factors need to be considered.

**Intending to develop a teaching quality framework to guide the development of capabilities and attributes that characterise good teaching at the University.**

### Supervision of postgraduate research students

**Considering a proposal (including benefits and costs) to establish a postgraduate school within the University** — The Food Transitions 2050 Postgraduate School is a partnership initiative that aims to “support the transition to more future-focused, sustainable food systems and preparation by the year 2050”.

**Developing a University Register of qualified supervisors** — Supervisors will also be required to undertake training.

**The University’s enhancement initiative to centralise the six-monthly reporting process for postgraduate students** — This reporting should be part of an enterprise solution, allowing a holistic view of students and their progress, and supervisors.

### Recommendations

Recommendations refer to areas where the Panel considers the University would benefit from making some improvements or changes. The Panel asked the University to consider:

#### Leadership and management of teaching, learning and academic quality

**Developing a more integrated approach to reporting that accesses data from different systems and functions to provide a holistic view of students, courses and staffing.**

**Setting out the development path and reporting expectations for online teaching and learning in its strategy update** — While online teaching and learning is becoming more important to the University, more clarity is needed about how it might move from being a strategic initiative to business as usual.

**Making academic risks more explicit in its Strategic Risk Register**, including the potential lack of appropriate staff capability for the changing student profile and academic integrity.

**Clarifying how and when the Motu Plan will be progressed, resourced and led** — This Plan was identified by the University as an enhancement initiative to enable Pacific students’ success, but little progress appears to have been made.

#### Student life cycle, support and wellbeing

**Establishing an integrated, holistic approach to monitoring transitions** — This will help determine the effectiveness of initiatives for different groups of students at different stages of their study.

**Whether the current academic advising arrangements serve students and the University well, allowing support to be optimally targeted** — Academic advice varies from degree to degree, can be difficult to access for postgraduate students and feedback is not sought so it is currently difficult to plan resourcing.

**Assessing how support (as part of the Disability Action Plan) is being implemented consistently and fairly across the University** — Some inconsistencies should be addressed, including guidance on the use of generative artificial intelligence tools.

### **Curriculum, assessment and delivery**

**Taking an integrated and aligned approach to course monitoring, using data that can be validated and cross-referenced** — The University plans an enhancement initiative to make greater use of qualitative data collected in course evaluations, but this can be resource intensive and alignment with other course monitoring initiatives should be considered.

**Establishing a process for systematically collating themes in academic programme and professional accreditation reviews and their associated follow-up reports.**

**Developing a mechanism to assess more directly whether graduate attributes are being achieved** — Graduate attributes are listed on the University's website. Achieving these is expressed in terms of graduate outcomes—whether graduates consider their career aspirations are in line with their expectations—but without systematic curriculum mapping, it is unclear whether it is possible to assess the graduate attributes of specific programmes.

**Consulting further with Māori staff on the proposed bicultural competence and confidence attribute when developing a University Graduate Profile** — The low numbers of Māori staff able to guide this work are a concern, as is students' lack of awareness of graduate profiles and what they mean. More thought is needed on the work involved in implementing, maintaining and assessing the attainment of the Graduate Profile

**Urgently developing guidance on the use of Generative-AI tools** — Clarity is needed for both students and staff on what is and is not permitted, along with guidance on how these tools can provide learning support for disabled students

### **Teaching quality**

**Developing a strategic approach for recruiting and retaining Pacific academic staff**, in line with the aspirations of the Motu Plan.

**Reviewing how appropriate data to assess teaching quality will be collected and presented** — If student evaluations of teaching are used, steps need to be taken to improve the usefulness of these data.

### **Supervision of postgraduate research students**

**Reporting on compliance with requirements of the Register for appointing supervisors to an appropriate university-level committee** — This should include reporting on the completion of training.

**Implementing a confidential online channel through which postgraduate students can raise complaints** — The University should monitor how useful this is for students.

**Considering mechanisms to minimise inequity in the experience of postgraduate research students** — These could include mechanisms such as service level agreements that can be calibrated to different types and stages of research.

**Confirming that all fifteen-month progress reports for PhD students are being completed as expected** — If not, the University should take steps to ensure that they are.

## **What happens next?**

Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki Lincoln University has been invited to provide a follow-up report one year after the release of the audit report. The follow-up report should address progress on both affirmations and recommendations. Once it has been accepted by the AQA Board, the University's follow-up report should be made publicly available.

## **Further information**

Further information about academic audits, including previous audit reports, is available on the AQA website.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.aqa.ac.nz](http://www.aqa.ac.nz)