

## Summary of the 2023 Academic Audit of the University of Waikato – Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

### 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

### The University of Waikato – Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

The University was established in 1964 in response to lobbying from Hamilton locals. Its “special character” is set out in the University Charter. The University’s motto ‘Ko Te Tangata’ (For the People) reflects its philosophy that the University is in, of, and for the community.

A long-standing relationship with the Kīngitanga and Waikato-Tainui has been an important part of the University’s development and continues to evolve. The main campus in Hamilton is on land leased to the University by Waikato-Tainui. A second campus in Tauranga was opened in 2019, and the University has a continuing relationship with Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC) in Hangzhou.

The current University Strategy 2022-2024 focuses on recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring a sustainable future for the University. It has six goals, including progressing the objectives of a Taskforce set up to respond to an independent review of public claims on systemic racism at the University.

### About this report

This is the sixth academic audit of the University. The Panel considers the University meets—and in several instances exceeds—the outcomes and standards a university of good international standing would be expected to demonstrate.

## 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:

**Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic** — The University learnt from its experience (including from its partnerships and operations in China) and embedded new or revised practices that have matured and become part of good practice.

**Enacting its Treaty of Waitangi Statement across the University and establishing Te Aurei, a comprehensive work programme to enable this.**

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

**Planning and reporting** — The University has a coherent strategic framework, which includes how the University's Treaty of Waitangi Statement is informing plans, and is balancing cohesiveness in setting clear objectives and flexibility in how different parts of the University will contribute to these objectives.

**Making data available to inform planning and reporting** — The University now has a data warehouse and new tools to improve access to data. It has also improved training and developed a Learner Success Dashboard.

**Working with the Waikato Students' Union** — The University and WSU have established a comprehensive and supported class representative system, which includes almost 1000 students. Students also participate in committees and working or project groups.

**Developing The Pā and the Tauranga campus** — Bi-culturalism has been included in the design of these teaching and learning environments, which are guided by the University's strategic plans.

**Developing flexible learning** — The digital learning environment is consistent across the University, including offshore. FLEXI papers, a response to the COVID epidemic, are now an ongoing option to increase access to university education and part of the University's strategic direction.

**Managing risks to the quality and continuity of teaching** — The University has a mature approach, with effective risk and emergency management and business continuity processes.

**Improving access and achievement for Māori students** — The University has a data-informed, whole-of-system approach to learner success, and has aligned its enhancement theme initiatives with two key data projects to achieve this.

### Student life cycle, support and wellbeing

**Supporting first-year students' transition into the University** — The University collects both quantitative data and qualitative analysis to understand why students either do not complete their applications or leave after enrolling, and collects data on students' experiences of pre-arrival and orientation programmes.

**Supporting transitions to employment** — The University's commitment to work-integrated learning is a strength of its student experience and support for transitions to employment.

**Committing to providing equivalent student experiences across multiple campuses** — This includes learning support for offshore students, such as having dedicated liaison roles and exchange staff visits.

**Te Whare Pukapuka – The Library for its commitment to the strategic direction of the University** — After a 2021 restructure, The Library indigenised and improved its range of services, while a co-design/partnering approach to service design helps ensure it responds promptly to changing student needs.

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

**The University, the Māori Academic Board of Studies, and the Pacific Strategic Committee for their robust scrutiny of academic proposals that contribute to strategic direction for the University.**

**Creating and reviewing the Curriculum Design Framework (CDF)** — A robust review of the CDF was held in 2021, with the University discontinuing some papers it considered did not meet requirements.

**Consistent use of moderation across campuses.**

### **Teaching quality**

**Ensuring that staff based offshore receive an induction process that reflects both the University and the specific context of their campus and programme.**

**The range of teaching development opportunities available and the ways in which these support the University's strategic priorities** — The University uses its central teaching and learning unit (Te Puna Ako – Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning) to support the objectives in its Academic Plan and other priorities.

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

**Responding in a timely fashion to initial enquiries from prospective PhD students and following through with these students to enrolment and orientation.**

### **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**

**Developing and implementing the Student-Staff Partnership Framework between the University and the Waikato Students' Union** — This framework aims to foster a partnership approach across multiple areas of activity.

**Creating an Academic Risk Register** — The University is moving from relatively static risk registers to an approach based on dialogue and shared understanding of risks and their management. This new register will include academic integrity.

**Progressing the enhancement theme for Pasifika students** — The University is committed to creating a sense of belonging for Pacific students and is taking a data-informed, holistic approach to improve success for them.

#### **Student life cycle, support and wellbeing**

**Developing its Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system** — To further support consistent advising practices—including those available even before enrolment—the University plans to develop a CRM system and refresh its website to make it easier to use.

**Developing facilitated processes for complaints resolution within a Pacific cultural context** — This will improve extensive existing processes for lodging and managing complaints.

**Implementing the Disability Action Plan** — This comprehensive document makes explicit reference to other plans and identifies priorities. Implementing it will contribute to the University being an inclusive and welcoming university for disabled students.

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

**Increasing awareness of graduate profiles** — The University has identified an enhancement initiative that will enable it to review progress towards achieving the graduate attributes more readily.

**Reviewing assessment guides and resources to ensure they reflect the University's principles for assessment.**

**Reviewing moderation practices.**

**The University's approach to academic integrity** — This includes education, assessment design, support and reporting. The University should continue to develop its thinking on the use of generative AI and other emerging technologies with implications for academic integrity.

**Reviewing its policy on Use of Māori for Assessment** — The University plans to develop a te reo Māori strategy and the policy will be reviewed as part of this.

### **Teaching quality**

**Looking to increase the numbers of Māori and Pacific staff employed at the University through a range of initiatives.**

**Changing the academic promotions system, particularly explicitly including Mātauranga Māori in the expected teaching narrative.**

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

**The implementation framework and the priorities the University has established for responding to recommendations made in the 2021 Master's and Honours Review.**

**Initiatives to support equity for under-served groups in postgraduate research studies, particularly Māori and Pacific students.**

## **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**

**Providing training and support for student members of committees and boards consistently across the University.**

### **Student life cycle, support and wellbeing**

**Considering how Māori models of wellbeing would better support Māori students** — Health and wellbeing services have adapted to meet new challenges and student needs. While some targeted services are available, the high proportion of Māori students means it would make sense to consider using Māori models of health and wellbeing in service design.

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

**Reviewing how to communicate expectations and provide guidance for peer reviewing other universities' proposals submitted to the Committee on University Academic Programmes** — This can involve a lot of work and more guidance would be useful on what should be considered, particularly for the Māori Academic Board of Studies and the Pacific Strategic Committee.

**Progressing its workforce development strategy to build the capacity of staff fluent and able to assess and supervise in te reo Māori** — The University needs to be more deliberate in its efforts.

### **Teaching quality**

**Reviewing its criteria for staff to participate in a structured induction** — New staff on contracts longer than two years are expected to have a personalised induction. This is a substantial length of time, particularly for staff in student-facing roles.

**Ensuring that new Heads of Department receive an induction specific to the expectations of their role.**

**Appropriately recognising the work of Māori and Pacific staff in supporting recruitment and induction processes.**

**Considering how expectations of teaching staff (in terms of professional development) might be better connected to the Performance and Professional Development Framework or the Academic Workloads Guidelines** — This could be done when renewing the Tertiary Teaching Development Expectations Framework.

**Reviewing the alignment between its expectations for staff engagement with the Objectives, Development and Review process and engagement in teaching development** — Both processes support capacity and capability building, but a disconnect between access to them may mean the University is missing opportunities to build capacity and capability.

**Taking steps to increase response rates for student evaluations of papers and teaching** — Evaluations are automatically included in Academic Staff Portfolios as part of promotions processes, so the University should look at increasing response rates so that staff and their managers have confidence in them.

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

**Including questions about the adequacy of resourcing and future needs in six-monthly progress reports** — Current reporting makes relatively little reference to asking about resource adequacy or future needs. Including questions about these could help students build research planning experience.

## **What happens next?**

The University of Waikato 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)