

## **Cycle 6 Academic audit of Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury Executive summary**

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 whole-of-institution view of a university's teaching, learning, student support and student outcomes. Audits are undertaken by a panel of peers comprising 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.

Universities in Aotearoa New Zealand are currently engaged in their sixth cycle of academic audit. Cycle 6 is a composite audit with two main phases. In the first phase, from 2017 – 2020, universities engaged in an enhancement theme focusing on access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pacific students. Further information is available on the enhancement theme's website.<sup>1</sup> The second phase of Cycle 6 is an audit against a framework of 30 guideline statements. Universities undertake a self-assessment against the audit framework and present a self-review report and portfolio of supporting evidence. Further information about academic audits, including previous audit reports, is available on the AQA website.<sup>2</sup>

Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury (the University) submitted its self-review on 23 April 2023 and provided further information requested by the Panel on 31 May 2023. The Panel found the self-review to be well supported by evidence. The Panel met twice (online) before undertaking an in-person site visit to the University from 10-12 July 2023. During the site visit, the Panel held 23 interview sessions and met with two members of Council, 70 members of staff and 30 students. Information gained through the interviews supplements that contained in the self-review portfolio and the Panel draws on both sources to reach its findings.

The Cycle 6 Academic Audit of Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury took place in the 150<sup>th</sup> year since the founding of the University. Many elements have contributed to a university that has developed a cohesive and collaborative approach to responding to challenges, including: its historical commitment to enabling access to university study; its rebuild and recovery following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes; the 2019 Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre attacks; the introduction of the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice; and the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The University's history and a recent renewal and strengthening of a relationship with Ngāi Tūāhuriri and Ngāi Tahu are evident in its strategic plan, which centres on engagement. The Panel is

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.enhanceunz.com/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.aqa.ac.nz](http://www.aqa.ac.nz)

impressed by the consultative and engagement-oriented approach the University has taken to strategy development and change. The University did have an extensive programme of change underway at the time of the audit and the Panel recommends the University extend its consultative and engagement-oriented approach into monitoring and communicating the overall programme of change as well as providing opportunities for early feedback on implementation.

The first section (A) of the audit framework is concerned with leadership and management of teaching and learning, and academic quality. The Panel is impressed by the availability of data for decision making and the University's intention to develop its analytics project further. It considers the ongoing provision of professional development opportunities would strengthen this capability further. Capability development to become a good Treaty partner is supported by Kaiārahi Māori across the University and the Panel sees this as a good model that is having impact.

The Panel sees further evidence of engagement and collaboration in the relationship with the University of Canterbury Students' Association (UCSA). It recommends, however, that the University ensure it consistently responds to student feedback and continues to work with Te Akatoki and UCSA to strengthen opportunities and support for the voices of Māori students and students from other priority student groups to be heard.

The University has taken an integrated and collaborative approach to planning and developing teaching and learning environments. It also demonstrates good practice in its management of risks and emergencies with the potential to disrupt the quality and continuity of teaching and learning. The Panel sees recent attention to academic risks as a positive development, along with plans to monitor delegations and consistency of decision making for teaching and learning quality and research supervision.

Progress on the enhancement theme is also assessed in this section. Structural changes to the provision of support for Māori students and Pacific students were underway at the time of the audit. These changes are intended to provide greater strategic clarity, which the Panel endorses. However, the Panel's comments about communication of and seeking feedback on change are relevant here.

The second section of the audit framework (B) focuses on student life cycle, support and wellbeing. The Panel is impressed with the University's strategic initiative—Kia Angitu—which takes a holistic approach to removing barriers and addressing equity gaps. This comprehensive approach is evident in the development of an advising model, embedding of career development learning in curricula and the University's approach to safety and wellbeing. The Panel suggests, however, that the University utilise its existing monitoring and review processes to consider whether a peer-assisted learning component of Kia Angitu is optimally targeted. It also suggests the University assess how effectively it is communicating information about complaints, appeals and grievances processes and outcomes.

The third section (C) of the audit framework examines curriculum, assessment and delivery. The Panel is pleased to see consultative and holistic approaches being taken to course and programme

development. These will be strengthened by implementing a curriculum management system. Significant work is underway reviewing the University's graduate profile and considering the future of assessment. The Panel recommends that, as part of the review of the graduate profile, the University consider how university-level attributes align with qualification attributes and how the University can ensure that attributes are met or assessed. It also recommends the University pay further attention to ensuring students understand how graduate profiles equip them with key knowledge and skills. In progressing its work on assessment, the Panel recommends that students be included in the working group and that the University continues to monitor the demand for assessment, including from postgraduate research students, in te reo Māori.

The fourth section for the audit framework (D) examines Teaching Quality and includes staff recruitment, induction, development and recognition. The University has a research-based approach to supporting teaching practices and curriculum design. The Panel is pleased by reports of a culturally affirming recruitment and induction process but considers there are opportunities to ensure that professional development and processes for recognising good teaching are also culturally appropriate and affirming. It considers the University's development of metrics, which take a holistic view of teaching quality and are reflected in requirements for promotion, to be important.

The final section (E) of the audit framework focuses on postgraduate research students. Again, the University has significant work underway here, implementing a graduate research school. The Panel is pleased to see the research-based approach the University is taking to this initiative. It suggests the University pay further attention to how information is made available to postgraduate research students and ensure confidentiality of concerns raised by them. It could also consider whether models developed for undergraduate students might also be relevant for addressing equity gaps in transitions and success for postgraduate research students.

The Cycle 6 Academic audit framework also asks universities to reflect on their obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the interdependence of university research and teaching, and universities' role as critic and conscience of society. The self-review assessment should encompass all students, all delivery and all staff who undertake or support teaching or supervision.

The Panel heard and saw evidence that the University values its partnership with Ngāi Tūāhuriri and Ngāi Tahu. This partnership continues to evolve and strengthen and is reflected at governance, leadership and operational levels. The Panel also heard and saw evidence of interdependence of university research and teaching with a research-based approach evident in several initiatives the University is undertaking. The Panel considers the University values its role as a critic and conscience of society.

With respect to the scope components of the audit framework, the Panel gained a sense that the University is aware of and responds to diverse student needs. The Panel considers there are opportunities where an equity, diversity and inclusivity lens could strengthen how the University supports teacher development and recognition, and has made recommendations to this effect. The

University needed to consider modes of delivery other than on-campus/in person, during the COVID-19 pandemic and has placed emphasis on blended and online delivery in its strategic commitment to accessible and flexible education.

Based on the evidence available to it at the time of the audit, the Panel considers the University meets, and in a number of instances exceeds, 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. The Panel has made seventeen commendations, thirteen affirmations and thirteen recommendations that support and encourage good practices and are intended to assist the University as it progresses its own strategic direction.

Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury should provide a follow-up report one year after the release of this report. The follow-up report should address progress on both affirmations and recommendations. Once it has been accepted by the AQA Board, the follow-up report should be made publicly available.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.aqa.ac.nz](http://www.aqa.ac.nz)