

Cycle 6 Academic audit of Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland 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 themes website.¹

The second phase of Cycle 6 is an audit against a framework of 30 guideline statements in five sections: (1) Leadership and management of teaching and learning, and academic quality; (2) Student life cycle, support and wellbeing; (3) Curriculum, assessment and delivery; (4) Teaching quality; and (5) Supervision of postgraduate research students. Universities undertake a self-assessment against the audit framework and present a self-review report and portfolio of supporting evidence. The university's self-review should reflect the university's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the interdependence of university research and teaching and universities' role as critic and conscience of society and its assessment should encompass all students, all delivery and all staff who undertake or support teaching or supervision.

Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland submitted its self-review portfolio on 11 April 2022 and provided further information requested by the Panel in June 2022. The Panel found the self-review to be comprehensive and well-supported by evidence. The Panel met twice (online) before undertaking an in-person site visit to the University from 25-27 July 2022. During the site visit, the Panel held 23 interview sessions and met with 74 members of staff and 41 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.

¹ <https://www.enhanceunz.com/>

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. It therefore meets the expectations of the Cycle 6 Academic Audit Framework. Commendations of good practice, affirmations of work underway and recommendations of matters for the University to consider are summarised below.

The Panel commends the University, its staff and students for their response to COVID-19. It is conscious that Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland experienced longer periods of lockdown and that this audit occurred closer in time to the significant impacts of audit than will hopefully be the case for universities to be audited later in the cycle. Also, in relation to COVID-19, the Panel commends the University for how its risk management and business continuity frameworks and processes enabled an effective response to COVID-19 and how the University's comprehensive range of learning support services pivoted to online to remain accessible to students during the pandemic.

The other major contextual factor for this audit is the University's programme of strategic renewal, which includes a new vision and strategic plan *Taumata Teitei*, a substantial Curriculum Framework Transformation Programme (CFTP) and associated refresh of the University's Graduate Profile, and revisions to service delivery models to support strategic changes. The Panel commends the vision and the intentions around the learning experience that have so far been captured in the CFTP. It also affirms the refreshed Graduate Profile and the plans to make this a valuable, practical document, useful for students' learning experiences and for their future employability. It also affirms the development of service delivery model components of a centralised course advising system and plans for greater use of analytics to identify students in need of support and tailoring of that support.

The Panel considers the following to be examples of good practice, and has made commendations in these areas:

- the University's significant investment in comprehensive data collection and the development and roll out of data dashboards to support decision-making
- the integrated and enhancement-oriented approach the University is taking to the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and international Learners) Code of Practice
- the University's annual Academic Quality Review process
- its Te Taumata Ngaio initiative to develop capability in te reo Māori across the University.

In addition to affirmations associated with strategic initiatives, the Panel also affirms:

- the University's intent to develop, with students, a student voice framework
- the development of the University's learning management system to support more engaged learning and changing assessment modalities
- the further development of assessment to be more flexible, equitable and accessible.

Establishing roles to support programme management and embedding learning design in programme development are likely to have positive impacts, as is the development of a university-wide online system for end-of-course review, and the Panel has made affirmations about these. The Panel also affirms enhancement initiatives identified by the University to review its Academic Standards Policy and to review and improve sub-doctoral processes and support.

The Panel has made recommendations where it considers the University would benefit from making further changes or improvements. It recommends the University include Te Tiriti o Waitangi implications in terms of reference for all reviews, including reviews of policies and procedures.

Associated with this, the Panel recommends:

- maintaining a whole-of-University focus on access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students (including postgraduate research students), led by the PVC Māori
- central monitoring of demand for assessment in te reo Māori
- progressing with urgency the Māori staff recruitment strategy to support other plans and strategies.

Progressing the CFTP and making greater use of digital teaching environments will have implications for staffing capability and competencies. The Panel recommends the University review its recruitment policies and practices to ensure these align with and support the strategic direction and the CFTP. Also, in the domain of teaching quality and staffing, the Panel recommends the University review its induction processes and ensure that induction programmes provide for the specific needs of new Māori staff and new Pacific staff. In developing its recruitment strategy for Pacific staff, the Panel recommends the University examine and address impediments to recruitment and recognition of Pacific staff, particularly for appointment or promotion to Professorial level. More broadly, the Panel recommends the University review whether its nomination processes for teaching excellence awards are inclusive and supportive of those who may not nominate themselves.

The Panel has also made recommendations relating to students, including postgraduate research students. It recommends that the University maintains a whole-of-university focus on access, outcomes and opportunities for Pacific students (again including postgraduate research students), led by the PVC Pacific. For postgraduate research students, the Panel recommends the University examine whether processes for addressing issues with doctoral and sub-doctoral supervision are sufficiently accessible, transparent, timely, effective and afford protection for both students and supervisors. It also recommends that the University include cultural competency and safety in its supervisor development programme and requirements for supervisor accreditation. In progressing its work on the development of a student voice framework, the Panel recommends the University undertake further work on training, recognition and managing the impact on students as they contribute to university initiatives and decision-making and ensuring information about how the University has responded to student feedback is clearly available.

Finally, the Panel recommends the University takes a holistic approach to academic integrity and includes support for prevention, detection, investigation and reporting. This final recommendation builds on the University's enhancement initiative to progress its work on academic integrity.

The pattern of commendations, affirmations and recommendations reflects the strategic work underway at the University. The Panel has made recommendations that are intended to assist the University as it progresses its own strategic direction. It has also endorsed the direction of enhancement initiatives identified by the University in its self-review.

Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland 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.

Further information about academic audits, including previous audit reports, is available on the AQA website.²

² www.aqa.ac.nz