

news

March 2018

AQA

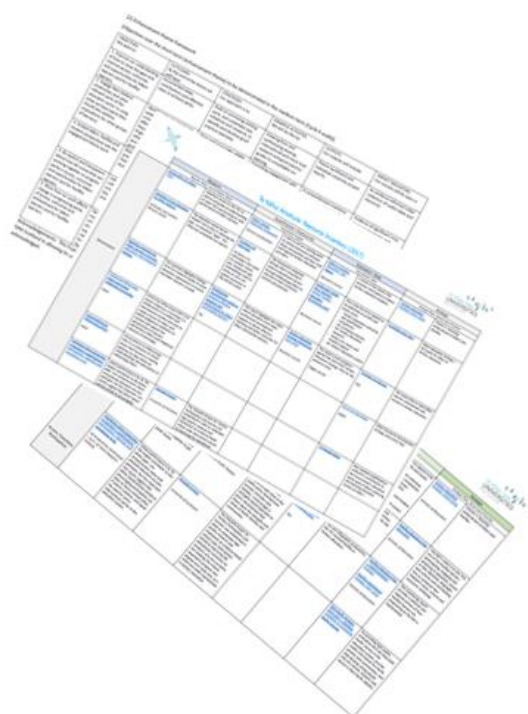
Academic
QualityAgency
For New Zealand Universities



Te Pokapū Kōunga Mātauranga mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa

Quality Enhancement

The enhancement theme phase of Cycle 6 is well underway with the Enhancement Theme Steering Group meeting for the third time in mid-March. All universities have developed their plans for the enhancement theme and, as expected, they have different foci and are taking different approaches. There are however, some areas of commonality across the plans: all are framed by and align with the universities' strategic priorities; the initiatives and activities can be broadly grouped into those concerned with access and successful transition and those concerned with retention and outcomes; all include (or indicate that they will include) the student voice in their internal steering and oversight of theme activities; and all place emphasis the importance of data, with a number using data analytics. Universities will provide an update on their enhancement theme activities at the beginning of 2019.



In the meantime, AQA and the Enhancement Theme Steering Group are turning their attention to how best to share and learn from the wealth of initiatives underway and in development. An Enhancement Theme 'Symposium' towards the end of the year is being considered. AQA will also commission a review of enhancement theme processes to date to identify improvements for the final year of the enhancement theme phase of Cycle 6.

Enhancement Theme materials on the [AQA website](#) now include the Membership of the Enhancement Theme Steering Group, Terms of Reference, Answers to frequently asked questions, Frameworks for the enhancement theme and resources inventories.

AQA | About

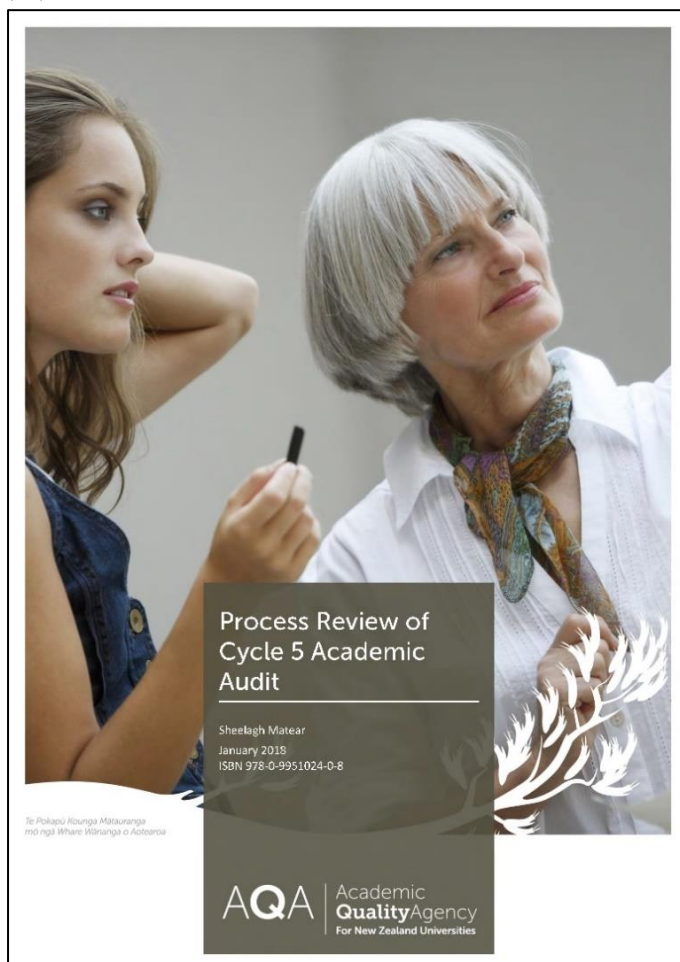
The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) was established in 1993 to carry out audits of the processes in universities which underpin academic quality. The mission

of AQA is to contribute to high quality New Zealand university education by engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of universities based on high quality, internationally acceptable,

academic practices, and by providing quality assurance and quality enhancement services which assist universities in facilitating excellent student experience and learning outcomes.

Review of Cycle 5 Audit Processes

With Cycle 5 Academic Audit drawing to a close, AQA has completed a review of audit processes. The review utilised feedback from universities and panel members collected throughout the audit cycle. The paper is available on the [AQA website](#) and summarised [here](#).



Feedback and other analysis found the coverage of the Cycle 5 Audit Framework to be appropriate and no major gaps were considered to exist. It was also found to be a robust means of enabling audit panels to provide a fair assessment of the quality of a university's processes. Nonetheless, opportunities to enhance the framework, and its support of a coherent narrative of university quality processes, have been identified. They include further attention being paid to evidence within self-reviews and strengthening the self-evaluative nature of self-review reports. These are being developed further in workshops with university Quality Managers as part of the development of the audit framework for Cycle 6.

The review of audit processes reinforced the importance of the self-review component of academic audit and the ongoing importance of site visits.

Site visits are a demanding part of the audit process for both universities and audit panels and the insight and conduct of panel members was valued in Cycle 5. Other panel processes, including communication of findings to universities, were found to be appropriate and effective. Opportunities to enhance audit processes, so that site visits are most effective, include changing the meeting schedule for audit panels and considering the purpose of different categories of questions to be asked in site visit interviews. The paper outlines factors to be considered in refreshing the AQA Register of Auditors and Reviewers and in forming audit panels for Cycle 6 Academic Audit.

Audit panels and universities considered they had been well supported by AQA throughout Cycle 5. However, academic audit is a significant undertaking and this review identifies additional opportunities for workshops, guides and other materials to support Cycle 6. In so doing, it supports AQA's purpose of contributing to the advancement of New Zealand university education through quality enhancement and quality assurance.

Cycle 6 Academic Audit Update

Apart from the enhancement theme activities, work has been progressing on the refresh of the Cycle 5 framework for use in the audit phase of Cycle 6. A third workshop with university Quality Managers was held in at the University of Canterbury in February.

Student Voice

With the sixth cycle of the academic audit under way, I have had the privilege to work alongside the AQA Enhancement Theme Steering Group as the Pasifika Student Member. The enhancement theme has enabled the perspectives of indigenous student voice to connect, learn and have robust discussions on how we can collectively work together, with the universities and representative groups, to enhance the 'access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori learners and Pasifika learners.' As one of two student representatives, it is very satisfying to see how much the student voice is valued, and how the student input contributes to the sharing of best practice on a national scale.



Ali Leota (second from right) connecting with Pasifika students at the University of Waikato.

At NZUSA we have recently seen a considerable amount of activity in the Pasifika student space. While the Pasifika population is increasing, the voice of Pasifika students still remains underrepresented on a national level. The enhancement theme has come at an important time for our Pasifika community in the New Zealand tertiary sector. NZUSA is very supportive of the enhancing the Pasifika student voice, by mobilising a national network of Pasifika tertiary students, similar to the establishment of Te Mana Ākonga (national body of Māori students).

Since December, it has been an immense pleasure to visit universities across New Zealand and learn more about the priorities, goals and concerns of Pasifika university communities. Every university continues to add value to the Pasifika voice, however it is time to be ambitious and take the next step in raising the Pasifika student voice. As our Pasifika ancestors navigated their way across the Pacific Ocean, I look forward to emulate their journey through connecting Pasifika students across Aotearoa together.

Ia manuia,

Ali Leota

Have You Seen This?

Presentations from the 2018 Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Annual Conference and CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) are available at:

http://www.chea.org/4DCGI/cms/review.html?Action=CMS_Document&DocID=55&MenuKey=main#conf-pres They cover international as well as American developments in quality assurance.

The new regulator for higher education in the UK – the Office for Students (OfS) – becomes operational in April. Wonkhe has a 'beginner's guide' to the new arrangements. See <http://wonkhe.com/blogs/a-beginners-guide-to-the-office-for-students>

Wonkhe has also developed a podcast series with UPP Foundation. See <https://wonkhe.com/blog-themes/podcasts/>

The UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has released an analysis of 308 'Higher Education Reviews' conducted between 2013 and 2016. See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/newsroom/comprehensive-evidence-of-improvements-in-student-experience-finds-report#.WrGKLuhuaUk>

Still in the UK, the Department for Education has released further graduate outcomes (LEO) data at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690859/SFR15_2018_Main_text.pdf and Wonkhe have provided commentary, including discussion of the relationship between graduate outcomes and value for money <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/parts-of-the-whole-leo-and-the-value-of-public-value/>

Closer to home, NZQA is consulting on how micro-credentials might be recognised in New Zealand. See <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/news/consultation-on-recognising-micro-credentials-in-new-zealand/>

Meetings and Conference Calendar

2 – 4 May 2018 in Mauritius
The 11th biennial INQAAHE Forum
<http://www.inqaahe.org/blog/inqaahe-11th>

7 June 2018 in Glasgow
15th Enhancement Conference: Evaluation, Evidence and Enhancement: Inspiring Staff and Students
<http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/conference>

6 – 8 June 2018 in Melbourne
Learning Leaders in Higher Education and HEQN Conference: higher education and assessment, integrity and review
<https://www.hes.edu.au/events/learning-leaders-higher-education-conference-and-higher-education-quality-network-conference>

2 – 5 July 2018 in Adelaide
HERDSA: Valuing Higher Education
<http://herdsa2018.aomevents.com.au/call-for-contribution/>

8 – 11 July 2018 in Auckland
STARS (Students Transitions Achievement Retention Success) Conference
<https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/event/2018-stars-conference/>

18 – 19 October, 2018 on the Gold Coast
Regional Universities: Anchor Institutions Transforming their Regions
<https://www.hes.edu.au/events/regional-universities-anchor-institutions-transforming-their-regions>

28 – 30 November in Melbourne
TEQSA Conference and Higher Education Quality Forum 2018
<https://www.hes.edu.au/events/teqsa-conference-and-higher-education-quality-forum-2018>



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We welcome feedback on this newsletter and the AQA website, along with news and suggestions for newsletter items.

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