

**LINCOLN
UNIVERSITY
TE WHARE WÄNAKA O AORAKI
ACADEMIC
AUDIT REPORT
CYCLE 3 JANUARY 2007**



New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit - *Te Wāhanga Tātari*

**Lincoln University
Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki**

Academic audit report

Cycle 3

January 2007

This audit report is the eighth and last report of Cycle 3 academic audits to be administered by the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit during the period 2003-2006.

The focus for Cycle 3 audits was:

- *teaching quality*
- *programme delivery, and*
- *the achievement of learning outcomes*

*The hardcopy printed version of this report is the version authorised by the Board.
An electronic version of the report is posted on the Unit's website.*

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PREFACE

BACKGROUND

The New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit was established in 1993 to consider and review New Zealand universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the academic quality and standards which are necessary for achieving their stated aims and objectives, and to comment on the extent to which procedures in place are applied effectively and reflect good practice in maintaining quality.¹

Cycle 1 academic audits were full institutional audits of the then seven universities; they were conducted during the period 1995-1998. Cycle 2 academic audits focussed on research policy and management, the research-teaching nexus and the support of postgraduate students, as well as a theme specific to each university; they were conducted during the period 2000-2001. In 2001, a full institutional academic audit was conducted at the eighth New Zealand university - the newly-created Auckland University of Technology.

Cycle 3 academic audits, of which this audit of Lincoln University is the eighth and last, have been focused on:

- teaching quality,
- programme delivery, and
- the achievement of learning outcomes,²

and have been conducted over the period 2003-2006.

THE PROCESS OF AUDIT

The process of audit requires a self-review which informs an audit portfolio (structured with respect to the Cycle 3 framework) in which the university evaluates its progress towards achieving its goals and objectives related to the focus of the audit, identifies areas for improvement, and details intended plans, strategies and activities with respect to enhancement initiatives. After examining the portfolio, and seeking further information if necessary, the Audit Panel conducts interviews in an Audit Visit to the university to seek verification of materials read, and to inform an audit report which is structured in accordance with the framework for the conduct of Cycle 3 audits as set down in the Unit's 2002 *Academic audit manual*.³ The report commends good practice and makes recommendations intended to assist the university in its own programme of continuous improvement of quality and added value in the activities identified by the Unit as the focus of Cycle 3 audits.

Soon after the publication of the audit report, the Unit discusses with the university the preferred procedures to be used in the follow-up to audit and the monitoring of follow-up activities.

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC AUDIT

Lincoln University agreed to an academic audit visit in September 2006, requiring the submission of the self-review portfolio by the end of May 2006. The panel appointed to carry out the academic audit of the University met in Wellington on 21 June 2006 for a Preliminary Meeting at which it evaluated the material it had received, and determined further materials required. The Chair of the panel and the Director of the Unit undertook a Planning Visit to the University on 19 July 2006 to discuss the supply of the further materials requested as well as arrangements for the Audit Visit. The four-day Audit Visit by

¹ See *Appendix 2* for the Unit's complete terms of reference, its vision and its objective with respect to academic audit.

² See *Appendix 3* for the framework for Cycle 3 academic audits.

³ John M. Jennings (compiler), *Academic audit manual for use by the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, December 2002*, Wellington, the Unit, 2002.

the whole panel to Lincoln University took place on 18-21 September 2006, hosted by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Roger Field. During the visit, the panel interviewed 130 members of staff, students and stakeholders.

The findings of the panel as expressed in this report are based on the written information supplied by the University and on the information gained through interviews conducted during the Audit Visits.

JOHN M. JENNINGS

DIRECTOR
January 2007

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SUMMARY

GENERAL

- Lincoln University delivers a portfolio of programmes in biological, environmental and social sciences and commerce, with a focus on land-based activities and industries. There is a strong attention to applied and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and research. The Vice-Chancellor and his senior management team are commended for the manner in which the University's vision, environment for teaching and learning, and relationships with external stakeholders have been set, communicated and implemented.
- The University's academic diploma and degree programmes are delivered through four Divisions in a recently implemented arrangement that provides flexibility and collaborative ventures. Care must be taken to ensure variations in practice do not impact adversely on the quality of the learning experience.
- The small scale of the University brings both advantages and disadvantages. Small scale makes it easier for staff to collaborate, for quick responses to effect change and address issues of concern, for student access to academic staff, for personal care of students, and for informal conduct of business. Small scale carries with it the costs of overheads and compliance, getting the right balance of administrative structures and processes, and avoiding duplication. Refinement to structures and processes may occur as the new structure matures.
- The Academic Board has a range of sub-committees with responsibilities in the areas of teaching and learning. Responsibilities and accountabilities for maintaining and enhancing the quality of the delivery of academic programmes rests with the Divisions and Division Directors.
- The University aims for the integration of academic quality review and planning which supports a continuous approach to quality assurance. The University is commended for the extent of academic staff involvement during the audit self review and for the integration of enhancement initiatives into planning processes.
- The University has a teaching and learning policy and a teaching and learning statement. While it is appreciated that initiatives in this area are integrated into the University's annual operational plan, the University should enunciate medium-term strategies, targets, and performance indicators for teaching and learning, and should initiate an institutional process for the dissemination of good practice.
- The University is commended for the strengthening of relationships with Ngāi Tahu and Te Taumutu Runanga and for its commitment to ensuring the University provides education best suited to Māori aspirations. The University has a number of commitments to Treaty issues, including recruitment, articulations and linkages, and student support. The geographical location of the University limits the potential for growth in the numbers of both Māori and Pacific Island students.
- The initiatives being taken in the area of equity are meeting statutory requirements and student expectations.

TEACHING QUALITY

- The University is commended for the high level of commitment and loyalty of staff. The University is addressing the issue of staff workload pressures.
- The support and effective assistance given to staff by Teaching and Learning Services is commended. Staff resources in Teaching and Learning Services are limited, and use is made of opportunities offered by involvement in the Canterbury Tertiary Alliance to enhance staff development.
- The University may wish to consider whether student evaluation of teacher performance should remain voluntary given its expectation that staff will seek ways to enhance their performance.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

- The University has a range of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary courses and teaching which are to be found to varying extents, and in varying forms, across the University. It is not so clear if there is a shared institution-wide understanding of 'interdisciplinary' and 'multidisciplinary' when applied to student learning, and an institution-wide discussion to ensure consistency and transparency in the application of the terms to teaching and learning is recommended.
- There is much data collecting associated with the conduct and outputs of academic programmes, with reviews of programmes and disciplinary areas leading to both the introduction and/or withdrawal of programmes or their constituent academic units.
- The commitment and competence of the University's student support staff is commended, and the University has initiatives with respect to student learning support both academic and pastoral. The University should develop a more systematic approach across the University to identify students at risk academically.
- The University has initiatives in place with respect to postgraduate student recruitment and support, as well as the administration associated with postgraduate programmes. Recommendations from recent University reviews relating to aspects of the supervision of research students are to be addressed and implemented by the University.
- The applied nature of the disciplines which make up the University's profile encourage the application of theory to practice. Students are getting real-life experiences within the teaching and learning programme.
- Students have high expectations of information communication technologies as a teaching and learning tool. The University has recently converted to Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment). The development of this resource will require careful monitoring of the quality of learning materials and the adaptation of learning practice with the greater integration of on-line processes.
- 'Regional Education' at the University describes undergraduate off-campus learning programmes. Consideration is being given to pulling back on Regional Education as a separate exercise and to integrating it into the work of the Divisions.
- For many years, the University has had a high proportion of international students, and therefore has had considerable experience in developing processes to support their special needs. The Foundation Studies and English Language Centre plays an important role in preparation and support. The University has an initiative to enhance a deeper understanding by students and staff of the significance and diversity of cultures within the University community.
- The University is looking to investigate new off-shore delivery opportunities. Such engagements are developed only if they satisfy the same quality criteria as are required of all University programmes, particularly with respect to the quality of teaching and the teaching standards of teachers, admission, assessment, teaching and moderation processes.
- The University is commended for the quality of the student learning facilities in the Library and for the University's responsiveness to the development of information communications technology in meeting students' expectations. Much of this arises from the commendable operational relationship between the Library and Information Technology Services.
- The University conducts a range of graduate feedback and satisfaction surveys which provide a great deal of information on performance. The extent to which students were aware of the nature of the use made of survey information was variable.

ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

- The University is commended for its commitment to, and progress made in, ensuring a realistic fit between statements of graduate attributes, and teaching and student learning outcomes.
- The University has developed its first statement on community and industry engagement which provides a framework for managing community and industry engagement. The University has initiatives to review activities and to improve their effectiveness. The University relies on external professional accreditation processes, programme reviews, networking and industry engagement to inform curriculum design and development.
- The University has an assessment policy, and staff are addressing the challenge of linking assessment effectively to both learning outcomes and learning styles particularly in subjects that have an applied focus.
- The University should develop an institution-wide understanding of benchmarking in teaching and learning to support the many and varied informal benchmarking activities.

COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key: C = Commendations R = Recommendations

NOTE: *The words 'the University' in each recommendation is intended to refer to the agency within Lincoln University that the University itself deems to be the one most appropriate to address and progress the recommendation.*

GENERAL

Context

C 1 [p.1] The panel commends the University for the ability of the Vice-Chancellor and his senior management to express and implement a vision for the University, to communicate it, to set a positive environment for teaching and learning, and to maintain effective working relationships with external stakeholders.

Quality assurance and preparation for the audit

C 2 [p.4] The panel commends the University for the extent of academic staff involvement during the self review in the issues on teaching and learning raised by the Cycle 3 framework, and in the integration of enhancement initiatives into the University's planning processes and thereby into the University's programme of improvement.

Teaching and learning policy and statement

R 1 [p.7] *The panel recommends that the University facilitates and supports the enhancement of an institutional quality culture in teaching and learning by making explicit strategies, targets, performance indicators in this area, and by developing an institutional process for the dissemination of good practice.*

The Treaty of Waitangi

C 3 [p.8] The panel commends the University for the strengthening of relationships with Ngāi Tahu and Te Taumutu Runanga and for its commitment to ensuring the University provides education best suited to Māori aspirations.

TEACHING QUALITY

Staff deployment

C 4 [p.11] The panel commends the University for the high level of commitment and loyalty of staff, and the high faith they place in the distinctive character of the University.

Staff development and review

C 5 [p.12] The panel commends the University for the reputation of the staff of Teaching and Learning Services for being highly supportive of academic staff who seek their assistance, and effective in the assistance they provide.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teaching and learning

R 2 *The panel recommends that the University facilitates an institution-wide discussion on the pedagogical basis and understanding of 'interdisciplinary' and 'multidisciplinary' teaching and learning to ensure a transparency in their application.*
[p.16]

Student diversity and support

C 6 The panel commends the University for the commitment and competence of student support staff.
[p.18]

R 3 *The panel recommends that the University reviews the effectiveness of staff-student consultation processes across the University.*
[p.18]

R 4 *The panel recommends that the University enhances its processes to identify students at risk academically, in support of the University's student-centred philosophy.*
[p.19]

Internationalisation

C 7 The panel commends the University for the quality and relevance of courses delivered by the Foundation Studies and English Language Centre.
[p.22]

The Library and Information Technology Services

C 8 The panel commends the University for the quality of the student learning facilities in the Library, and for the University's responsiveness to its development in information communications technology and to meeting students' expectations of learning in a technology-rich environment.
[p.23]

C 9 The panel commends the University for the strong operational relationship between the Library and Information Technology Services.
[p.23]

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Graduate attributes

C 10 The panel commends the University for the commitment to ensuring a realistic fit between statements of graduate attributes and teaching and student learning outcomes.
[p.25]

Community engagement

R 5 *The panel recommends that the University reviews and makes transparent the mechanisms used to gain stakeholder input into the design, development and review of curriculum, and thereby provide greater use of information arising from progress on University Major Initiatives 3.1 and 3.2 concerning community engagement.*
[p.26]

Benchmarking

R 6 *The panel recommends that the University develops an institution-wide understanding of benchmarking in teaching and learning and develops more formal processes to enhance national and international benchmarking of teaching and learning.*
[p.27]

1 GENERAL

1.1 CONTEXT

Lincoln University is a small institution (4,268 students, 3,396 Equivalent Full-Time Students) with a portfolio of programmes in biological, environmental and social sciences and commerce, with a focus on land-based activities and industries and applications to agriculture and the environment. The University's reputation for research both nationally and internationally is high, and the University provides a strong research environment for student teaching and learning. The self-review portfolio and additional materials, and staff and students in interviews, stressed the University's characteristic of an applied and interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research. To a large extent, this arises from the academic programme portfolio of Lincoln University; it is to be expected that field trips, work placements, work experience and the application of theory in practice will be a necessary part of academic programmes relating to agricultural education and to environmental and applied science education.

There is a strong commitment by the University to students gaining real-life experiences within the teaching and learning programme, with contextual learning enhanced by strong links to the community. Stakeholders interviewed by the panel accepted the distinctive nature of Lincoln and reported on the strong international reputation of the University.

The present structure of Divisions is relatively new with the restructuring being completed in 2005. The realignment activity associated with academic programme management was completed during 2006. In general, staff interviewed by the panel were supportive of the change, were enthusiastic about the potential of the University to deliver interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary academic programmes, and the ability of the University to provide work-ready graduates. Staff had confidence in the present senior management who were keeping the University community informed about ongoing change.

COMMENDATION

C 1 The panel commends the University for the ability of the Vice-Chancellor and his senior management to express and implement a vision for the University, to communicate it, to set a positive environment for teaching and learning, and to maintain effective working relationships with external stakeholders.

1.2 STRUCTURE

The University's qualifications are delivered through four Divisions:

- *Agriculture and Life Sciences* Division (762 Equivalent Full-Time Students [EFTS], 20.7% international),
- *Bio-Protection and Ecology* Division (121 EFTS, 20.1% international),
- *Commerce* Division (1,442 EFTS, 66.3% international),
- *Environment, Society and Design* Division (858 EFTS, 45.7% international).

Each of these Divisions is divided into discipline groups. The staff within each of those groups have the freedom to contribute to degree programmes in their areas of expertise, including degree programmes hosted by other Divisions. This arrangement provides a flexibility which

permits staff to contribute to subjects that have an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary characteristic. The panel was assured by staff that the Division structure did not hinder collaborative and interdisciplinary research and teaching, most of which arose from the forging of strong individual linkages. In some aspects, the bringing together of discipline areas within some of the Divisions had further facilitated linkages.

The Foundation Studies and English Language Centre (180 EFTS, 95% international) – is committed to language and study skills preparation for entry into University certificate, diploma and degree programmes.

The realignment of the University into Divisions began during 2004 and it is intended to enhance responsiveness further and to generate organisational efficiencies as the realignment matures, with Divisions having greater responsibility for the development and management of academic programmes, the support of student learning and the delivery of research. Division Directors are responsible for the quality of teaching, the delegation of teaching responsibilities, feedback on teaching and learning, and academic staff development and performance management. Divisions are responsible to the Academic Board for ensuring curriculum is current, reviewed regularly and appropriate to the needs of students and the academic programmes. Group Leaders of discipline areas within Divisions are responsible to the Division Directors for curriculum development, subject delivery, assessment and examination.

The panel was told by those interviewed that the new structure was an improvement on the old. The panel's comments and suggestions in this report with respect to aspects of the impact of the structures on teaching and learning are offered in an attempt to help both the structures and the operations within those structures mature.

The panel was given mixed messages about consistency of practices, roles and powers of Divisions, arising in part from the different sizes and cultures associated with different discipline areas. The panel is of the view that in consolidating the new structure, the University should take care that variations of practice do not impact adversely on the quality of the learning experience for students across the University, and that good practices in individual Divisions are captured and disseminated across the University.

A recurring factor to arise during the audit process was the small size of the University. The panel was made aware of the advantages of small scale: the ease with which it is possible to develop professional relationships with staff across campus; the ability to be fleet-footed and responsive to change; the possibility of dealing quickly with issues of concern; the ease of student access to teachers and supervisors; the ability to keep a more personal eye on students in classes with smaller enrolments and thereby enhance student learning support where that is required; economies and efficiencies.

There are disadvantages to small scale, and these were referred to on several occasions: the costs of overheads and compliance; getting the right balance in terms of administrative structures and processes; the duplication of resources arising from the structure into self-contained Divisions, most of which are relatively small. The scale of the University limits funding in all areas, putting pressure on the calls for updating of teaching equipment, and the taking up of the full advantage of opportunities for e-learning and Regional Education. Staffing in some areas of support services are 'one deep'.

There was a similar duality in the conduct of business. The scale of the operation permits the use of informal processes in the conduct of business. This is acceptable when it works, but too high a dependence on informal ways of transacting business may not ensure optimal outcomes or may

not leave an audit trail for when things go wrong. It is important to have a clear and consistent understanding about lines of responsibility and accountability for the quality of teaching and learning within Divisions across the University.

It might be expected that there would be simple structures, but this does not always appear to be the case. The panel was surprised by the relative complexity of committee structures and the long lines of communication. The University appears to be operating as one would expect of a larger and more complex institution. However the panel is cognisant of comments from many interviewed that although at times the array of committees may delay eventual approval of change, they do provide checks and balances which should result in a better assurance of quality. There may be further refinement in this area as the Division structures are bedded in, providing a balance among systems that are simple, formal and effective.

1.3 COMMITTEES

The *Academic Board* is the primary academic forum for the discussion of curriculum development, approval and delivery. The Board is the final check for quality and the maintenance of standards. The Board advises the University Council on items relevant to academic matters, and the Council receives regular reports on performance. The Academic Board is of a size (27 members) at which it is able to facilitate debate of substantive issues and of academic matters across disciplines relating to the University as a whole.

There are three main subcommittees of the Academic Board with responsibilities in the areas of teaching and learning.

The *Academic Administration Committee* advises the Academic Board on matters relating to the various aspects of administration and maintenance of academic standards, student admissions, course approvals, examination processes and grade profiles. It is operational and regulatory and oversees students' progression through the University. The Committee has a Postgraduate Subcommittee to deal with postgraduate matters.

The *Academic Programmes Committee* has responsibilities to the Academic Board for the introduction of new 'courses'⁴ and academic programmes and the monitoring and review of current programmes to ensure currency and relevance, consistency and equality across the University. The Committee advises the Academic Board on matters relating to the portfolio of programmes and subjects offered by the University and their delivery.

The *Subjects Committee* is responsible to the Academic Board for the detailed scrutiny of the integrity, quality and rigour of 'subjects',⁵ including the rationale for proposals, appropriateness of prerequisites and recommended preparation, appropriateness of assessment and implications for all relevant academic programmes.

Responsibilities and accountabilities for maintaining and enhancing the quality of the delivery and academic programmes rests with the Divisions and the Division Directors. The *Division Teaching Committees* consider teaching and learning issues as are best suited to the needs of each Division. They are responsible for the quality of teaching and learning, consider proposals for changes in programmes and subjects, and respond to relevant institutional issues related to

⁴ At Lincoln University, a 'course' is a qualification – a degree, diploma or certificate programme. Typically, a full-time course of study for an undergraduate degree is four subjects per semester, with a three-year bachelor's degree course comprising twenty-four 'subjects'.

⁵ At Lincoln University, a 'subject' is the smallest academic unit – a paper or course.

the delivery of subjects. Committees are also expected to engage, support and facilitate staff development, but the panel was unable to find a clear understanding of the role of these Committees in this regard. Members of the Committees saw their function as largely confined to considering programme development and changes.

Key personnel within Divisions are the *Academic Programme Managers* who have responsibilities to the Division Directors, as well as reporting relationships to the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Academic Programme Managers assist with new academic programme development, the performance of existing academic programmes, and support and course advice to students. They also help develop relevant external linkages with professional bodies and employers.

1.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PREPARATION FOR THE AUDIT

The University aims for the integration of academic quality review and planning which supports a continuous approach to quality assurance, thus ensuring that areas for improvement identified from review activity are incorporated into operational plans. In support of delivery, the University has developed an impressive and comprehensive web-based Lincoln Policies and Procedures suite. The panel found a degree of patchiness in terms of knowledge of the policies and the University recognises that there is evidence to suggest that many staff do not access such material.

Ongoing monitoring of quality in teaching and learning is the responsibility of the Divisions. The University recognises that it did not always have the data needed to support close monitoring, and appreciates the need to improve on the quality of data and use of that data.

The self-review portfolio described the self-review process associated with this audit in which, as far as possible, the University built on existing documentation. Preparing for this audit involved integrating information, documentation and activity from various sources rather than undertaking work solely for the purposes of the audit. Interviews confirmed for the panel that considerable staff discussion had preceded the writing of the self-review portfolio, although there did not appear to have been significant involvement by people in the support areas. Students were involved through a series of focus groups. The panel saw evidence for the integration of information into University planning in that the major actions and initiatives identified in the portfolio as relevant to the progress of activities associated with the focus of the audit were already incorporated into the University's *Operational plan 2006*. The panel applauds this integrated approach as it provides a greater ability to integrate academic audit, the University's own initiatives and the recommendations of this panel, into the day-to-day activities of the University.

The University Major Initiatives for 2006 relating to the framework of this academic audit came from the *Operational plan 2006*; they are quoted in this report, and are commented upon by the panel.

COMMENDATION

C 2 The panel commends the University for the extent of academic staff involvement during the self review in the issues on teaching and learning raised by the Cycle 3 framework, and in the integration of enhancement initiatives into the University's planning processes and thereby into the University's programme of improvement.

1.5 OBJECTIVES

The University's *Charter* contains a mission statement which includes a commitment to:

- *Provide an innovative and challenging learning environment that is focussed on enabling its students to achieve their potential.*

Four goals in the *Charter* are particularly relevant to this audit.

Academic quality

- *Encourage excellence through implementing quality management systems and performance targets that ensure high standards are achieved and sustained.*

Programme development

- *Provide high quality, relevant academic and education programmes which meet national and international needs.*

Service provision

- *Enable students to realise their optimum potential and to ensure that needs of all stakeholders are met.*

Staffing

- *Foster a collegial and supportive employment environment which attracts and retains the highest quality academic and support staff.*

The two-page *Statement of strategic direction 2005-2015* provides a direction for the University through the next decade. The statement summarises the University's vision, values and eight strategic objectives which blend the medium-term priorities of the University with the national Tertiary Education Strategy. The eight strategic objectives are as follows.

Teaching and learning excellence

- *To provide highly relevant research-informed qualifications of recognised quality.*

Research excellence

- *To foster knowledge creation, knowledge transfer and innovation through research and research-based teaching.*

Student experience and support

- *To enhance the student experience and study environment.*

Community engagement

- *To encourage staff and students to engage, challenge and support the wider community.*

Māori aspirations

- *To contribute to Māori development aspirations and to meet responsibilities in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi.*

Pacific Peoples' aspirations

- *To contribute to the education and economic aspirations of Pacific people, both within New Zealand and in the wider Pacific region.*

Internationalisation

- *To advance internationalisation across all areas of the University.*

Management and stewardship

- *To manage the University's people and resources in a manner that will enable all students and staff to perform at their optimum.*

The University's *Profile 2006-2008* shows how the University plans to give effect to the Charter, contribute to the Tertiary Education Strategy, and measure the University's performance. The *Profile* contains operational objectives in support of the strategic objectives; appropriate operational objectives are quoted in this report at the head of relevant sections.

The University has an annual *Operational plan* designed to guide managers in setting priorities by describing major actions and initiatives to deliver the broader institutional strategy defined in the strategic and operational plans contained in the *Profile*. The plan concentrates on new activities or changes in emphasis.

The panel found all these documents – *Charter, Statement of strategic direction, Profile* and *Operational plan* – provided good guidance and direction in areas relevant to the audit. In terms of practice, the operational responsibility for the delivery on the objectives and strategies in these documents is invested in the Divisions, and in their Directors.

Council has input into planning documents and receive regular reports on performance, but has delegated responsibility for the teaching and learning to the Academic Board.

1.6 TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY AND STATEMENT

The University maintains a planning framework by which it recognises needs, plans for change, monitors action and implements activity relevant to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning outcomes.

The *Teaching and learning policy* (2006) aims:

to support student learning which will enable them to acquire the disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and attributes they will need to achieve social and economic independence.

The *Teaching and learning statement* [2004?] sets out a framework for managing teaching and learning policies and activities, and provides practical advice to foster the development of good practice in teaching and learning and the sharing of information, and to provide performance targets that will enable the University to assess how well teaching and learning objectives are being achieved. The statement includes information on Division structures, teaching and learning services, policies and the nature of student input. The major sections that follow use the framework laid down for Cycle 3 academic audits – namely, teaching performance and quality (staff appointment, induction, professional development, appraisal, awards for excellence, and student evaluations), programme delivery (curriculum design and delivery, the learning environment, programme review, approval and accreditation, academic audit, student surveys) and teaching and learning outcomes (teaching outcomes, assessment, achievement of standards).

The Statement is not a plan and is, therefore, without objectives, targets, responsibilities and performance indicators. This is consistent with the University's preference to integrate new initiatives in all aspects of its operations into its institutional planning process and annual *Operational plan*. However, there remains some vagueness as to how an institutional quality culture in teaching and learning is to be developed, implemented and sustained. The panel was told of examples of good practice within Divisions and of examples of the sharing of good practice that arise from informal working relationships. The University should find mechanisms to further facilitate the sharing and adaptation of good practice across the institution.

RECOMMENDATION

R 1 The panel recommends that the University facilitates and supports the enhancement of an institutional quality culture in teaching and learning by making explicit strategies, targets, performance indicators in this area, and by developing an institutional process for the dissemination of good practice.

The statement also leaves unclear how strategic planning is aligned with strategic budgeting in support of coursework and research related to teaching and learning other than through the institutional planning process and annual *Operational plan*. The University is committed to *manage the University's people and resources in a manner that will enable all students and staff to perform at their optimum*. However, while the panel is not insensitive to the constraints on funds under which all New Zealand universities operate, and of the need to allocate resources to priority areas, the panel notes that it was told of teaching areas where it was proving difficult to find funding to update equipment in support of teaching and learning. Staff in those areas were concerned about the likely impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

1.7 THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

The University's *Profile 2006-2008* contains an operational objective:

To increase the number of Māori students, and the proportion of domestic students who are Māori.

Situated in the South Island, and just twenty minutes from the University of Canterbury with its School of Māori and Indigenous Studies, the University is competing for the relatively small number of Māori in the population within the Lincoln University catchment area. A sizeable proportion of Māori students come from all areas of New Zealand. The specialist academic profile of the University also helps in this regard. The small number of Māori enrolments limits what can be done.

The University is to be commended, therefore, for continuing to strengthen its relationships with Ngāi Tahu through Te Tapuae o Rehua partnership and consolidating its links with various papatipu runanga, including Te Taumutu Runanga, and Te Runanga o Ngāi Tuahuriri, and strategic alliances with other iwi and non-iwi based providers. Representatives of Ngāi Tahu and Te Taumutu Runanga spoke warmly and positively about their relationship with the University. The University Council has a Māori Development Taskforce subcommittee to advise Council on issues related to Māori students, curriculum and links with Māori communities. The University monitors the performance of Māori students against the performance of non-Māori domestic students, and it wishes to do more in student recruitment and in the development of articulations and relationships with institutions and agencies. **The panel supports these initiatives**, mindful that while there is limited potential for growth locally, there is potential in the University's strengths arising from its distinctive academic profile related to national needs.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

- 5.1 *Review approaches to Māori student recruitment and improve as required to generate enrolments.*
- 5.2 *Develop student articulation and other links with wananga, polytechnics and other Māori-focussed providers.*
- 5.3 *Enhance cultural academic and research interactions with Ngāi Tahu Whanui, Te Taumutu Runanga, other papatipu runanga, and other selected iwi and organisations as appropriate.*
- 5.4 *Establish Te Puna Whakapuawai as a means of co-ordinating Māori development and student support across the University.*
- 5.5 *Deliver the services and activities provided for through the Special Supplementary Grant negotiated with the Tertiary Education Commission.*
- 5.6 *Implement initiatives in line with the Charter of Understanding with Te Taumutu Runanga.*

COMMENDATION

C 3 The panel commends the University for the strengthening of relationships with Ngāi Tahu and Te Taumutu Runanga and for its commitment to ensuring the University provides education best suited to Māori aspirations.

An issue being faced by the University is the need to achieve the appropriate balance of responsibility to the Treaty of Waitangi with respect to academic programmes, the needs of students and the responsibility to recruit Māori students. In interviews, the panel was told that Māori students are enrolled in all Divisions – approximately one third in the two sciences Divisions, one third in Commerce, and one third in Environment, Society and Design – and that there are plans to consider a change of emphasis by developing subjects at first- and second-year levels with Māori emphasis and content in all Divisions as appropriate. In this way it was hoped to strengthen the Māori dimension across the curriculum, and to make this more easily available for all students. The University was aware of the need to manage the impact that such a development may have.

The small scale of the University and of Māori enrolment make it possible to offer pastoral support to Māori students, but it also means that such support has to be on a small scale. Students interviewed appreciated the heavy reliance on the goodwill of Māori staff in particular, supported by Teaching and Learning Services and the Library. Each Division has a Māori and Pacific Island student support co-ordinator to spread responsibility across the University.

1.8 PACIFIC ISLANDS

The University acknowledges the need to improve Pacific Island participation and support, and the University's *Profile 2006-2008* contains an operational objective:

To increase the number of Pacific Island students, and the proportion of domestic students who are Pacific people.

Given the close proximity of Lincoln University to another university, the potential for growth lies in the specialist academic profile of the University. Pacific Island students, as well as other students, referred to the collegial support that goes with a smaller campus as a reason for

enrolling at the University. The University is revising its Pacific Peoples' strategy to ensure it is delivering outcomes appropriate for the University and the Pacific communities.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

- 6.1 *Review approaches to Pacific student recruitment and improve as required to generate enrolments.*
- 6.2 *Establish a Pacifica Reference Group to provide advice and support for Pacific Peoples' development.*
- 6.3 *Develop a Pacifica development Strategy.*

1.9 EQUITY

The University's *Policy on equal opportunity* aims to ensure that all staff and students have equal access and encouragement to pursue their educational careers. The Equal Employment Opportunities Co-ordinator is responsible for developing, implementing, monitoring and reporting on an annual equal employment opportunities programme, and Directors are responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented effectively within Divisions. Given the nature of the academic programmes and the character of the University, the initiatives being taken in this area are meeting statutory requirements and student expectations.

2

TEACHING QUALITY

2.1 OBJECTIVES

The University's *Profile 2006-2008* contains the following strategic objectives with respect to teaching quality.

- *To provide highly relevant research-informed qualifications of recognised quality.*
- *To manage the University's people and resources in a manner that will enable all students and staff to perform at their optimum.*

The Profile contains relevant operational objectives in support of these strategic objectives.

Teaching and learning excellence

- *To encourage, recognise and support excellence in teaching.*

Management and stewardship

- *To encourage, recognise and reward excellent performance by students and staff.*

2.2 STAFF DEPLOYMENT

The panel interviewed a selection of staff from all levels and from all Divisions; they all valued the advantages to teaching and student support that arise from the small scale of the University. Staff interviewed were highly committed to the University, and were positive and constructive. Academic staff were enthusiastic about the subjects they delivered, and support staff were committed to the staff and students they serve.

COMMENDATION

C 4 The panel commends the University for the high level of commitment and loyalty of staff, and the high faith they place in the distinctive character of the University.

The final decisions about staff workload are made by the Division Directors in consultation with the Group Leaders within the Divisions who are responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the contribution of staff to academic programmes. The University is aware that there exists some variation between Divisions in the priority accorded to teaching versus other activities which may be warranted, given the nature of some subjects taught. Māori staff have commitments to Māori communities and the workload models attempt to recognise this. The University is aware that workload may be distributed unevenly across the University; this was also identified by staff interviewed as something that requires attention.

The University has set itself a major initiative in this area.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

- 1.2 *Implement changes to academic delivery with a view to reducing staff workload pressures, improving flexibility and reducing cost.*

Staff have commitments to teaching, research, administration, consulting and community activities. The delivery of two five-week Summer School which offers more intense study in a

number of first- and second-year subjects, adds to staff workload. In addition, the University recognises that given the small scale of the University, staff in some academic disciplines are 'one deep' which can cause difficulties over leave or resignation. **The panel supports** the initiative which will require a careful balance between reducing cost and maintaining quality.

2.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

The provision of support for the professional development of University staff is provided by the two Teaching and Learning Services staff dedicated to this area. (Teaching and Learning Services also administers the Student Learning Centre.) Teaching and Learning Services is responsible for the induction and orientation of new staff, emphasising effective delivery, examination and assessment. It also has particular expertise in the development of flexible delivery mechanisms. It provides support for staff to review teaching practices and to develop appropriate expertise in applying a range of flexible and innovative learning methodologies. It also provides Effective Tertiary Teaching workshops.

The small size of the staff development arm of Teaching and Learning Services is in keeping with the scale of the University, but the ambitious programme, and the desire of Teaching and Learning Services staff to interact with as many teachers as possible, places considerable demands on the Service. Teaching and Learning Services often uses academic staff who are known to have good practice as teachers to talk about their work. In interviews, the panel heard from staff who appreciate the high quality of the support they have been given by Teaching and Learning Services.

COMMENDATION

C 5 The panel commends the University for the reputation of the staff of Teaching and Learning Services for being highly supportive of academic staff who seek their assistance, and effective in the assistance they provide.

Teaching and Learning Services is also regarded as the main institutional agency for the dissemination of good practice, but its ability to carry out this task is limited by other demands made of the staff. The University needs to find appropriate ways of facilitating the dissemination of good practice, as has been identified in section 1.6 Recommendation 1 of this report.

The University has been involved in the Canterbury Tertiary Alliance initiative to develop an on-line professional development community for tertiary teachers, the work being funded by the Ministry of Education. The development is named Teachers for Teachers for Tertiary (T4T4T), and aims to establish a professional learning community of tertiary teachers.

The University has two major initiatives associated with professional development, including the formalisation of mentoring which appears to be available in only some places on campus at present. **The panel supports** these initiatives provided there is adequate leadership to direct their implementation.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

- 1.5 *Improve teaching quality by encouraging professional development that includes formal mentoring, dissemination of good practice and other professional development approaches.*
- 5.7 *Implement a staff development programme covering the Treaty of Waitangi, tikanga and other aspects relevant to the University community.*

Academic staff take part in an annual Professional Development and Appraisal process that has three components – appraisal of past performance; objective setting for the next period in line with Division and University goals; and planning career and professional development. The process was reviewed in 2005 and revised procedures are being implemented. The process is being further improved by ensuring a disconnect of appraisal from staff development and formal promotion. The responsibility for the effective management of this rests with Division Directors and Group Leaders, and from interviews, the panel came to the view that the impact of the process was uneven across the Divisions. The University is seeking to improve the Professional Development and Appraisal and the Annual Salary Review processes.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

8.5 Implement changes to the Professional Development and Appraisal process and the Annual Salary Review process.

The panel supports the initiative in the expectation that the changes will provide the level of support for the enhancement of the quality of teaching in keeping with the University's objectives.

The self-review portfolio reports that the University is currently exploring a modular teaching qualification that can be accessed by all academic staff. The panel considers this to be a good idea and in line with practice in other New Zealand universities, but the panel did not follow this up to find out where this process had got to at the time of the Audit Visit.

2.4 EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND FEEDBACK

The self-review portfolio states that:

Enhancement of teaching performance and the development of new methodologies are team activities within the University. They involve academic staff in a peer review capacity: Division Directors for oversight, students through their participation in evaluations of subjects, and Teaching and Learning Services for professional development.

The panel understands the University has not adopted a universal process of peer evaluation of teaching; and would rather staff be encouraged in peer review. Student evaluations of teachers focus on teachers' performances. (See section 3.11 with respect to Subject evaluations). Teacher evaluations are voluntary, although they are required for supporting promotion applications. The University may wish to consider whether such evaluations should remain voluntary given its expectation that staff will seek ways to enhance their performance. Student feedback should be an important part of any self-reflection. The University might also consider whether student evaluations of teachers should remain confidential to staff, and whether it is appropriate for Group Leaders and/or Division Directors not to be informed of staff performance, both good as well as not-so-good. While the panel accepts that most staff do have evaluations of their teaching, and understands the claims made by those interviewed that poor performance will show through on other indicators, such as subject evaluations, the panel believes that staff should be encouraged and supported to undertake student evaluations as part of their professional business as teachers.

It would appear that the University is effective at identifying good teaching performance but relies on informal methods of identifying under-performance. Informal methods may be effective, but the University should keep in mind that a more formalised and systematic approach

to managing under-performance might be desirable if consistency of outcome across the institution is to be assured.

3

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

3.1 OBJECTIVES

The University's *Profile 2006-2008* contains the following strategic objectives with respect to programme delivery.

- *To provide highly relevant research-informed qualifications of recognised quality.*
- *To foster knowledge creation, knowledge transfer and innovation through research and research-informed teaching.*
- *To enhance the student experience and study environment.*
- *To advance internationalisation across all areas of the University.*

The Profile contains relevant operational objectives in support of these strategic objectives.

Teaching and learning excellence

- *To increase student enrolments.*
- *To encourage, recognise and support excellence in teaching.*
- *To develop the University's academic programmes to ensure they are aligned to research, employment and student educational needs.*
- *To promote academic excellence, inspire life-long learning and stimulate personal development.*

Research excellence

- *To increase postgraduate student enrolments and enhance support for postgraduate students.*
- *To encourage, recognise and support excellence in research.*

Student experience and support

- *To enhance student academic and learning support services.*
- *To provide a responsive and supportive environment that reflects the diversity of student lifestyles.*
- *To celebrate the cultural diversity of the University and foster cross-cultural understanding amongst staff, students and the community.*

Internationalisation

- *To provide a learning environment that reflects the importance of international experiences in the context of globalisation.*
- *To achieve an international student profile that has an appropriate diversity of study disciplines, country of origin and level of study.*
- *To identify and progress off-shore delivery opportunities.*

3.2 INTERDISCIPLINARY AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEACHING AND LEARNING

A major feature of curriculum design and delivery at Lincoln University is the relationship between theory and practice, with strong experiential components of applied academic programmes – laboratories, field trips and tours, off-campus experiences relevant to achieving the desired learning outcomes.

The self-review portfolio reports the University's encouragement and support for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary study. This is identified in various ways: where students are required to choose subjects from across several Divisions; the design of subjects to meet the demands of more than one academic programme, thus requiring examiners to orient the material and learning objectives to students with different perspectives and ensure students interact with students in other programmes; the teaching of subjects in association with staff from other Divisions. The quality and effectiveness of the delivery of subjects and academic programmes, in relation to the learning outcomes and stated objectives, is the responsibility of individual academic staff and Division Directors.

A range of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary courses and teaching is to be found to varying extents, and in varying forms, across the University in keeping with the nature of its core competencies – environmental and biological sciences, agriculture, commerce and social sciences. Agriculture and applied science education, for example, require a range of disciplines and an understanding of their inter-relationship, and the application of theory to practice. In interviews, the panel was told several times of student field trips in agricultural science in which students were tutored by specialists from a range of subjects related to the situation in the field and were thus able to relate the various parts to the whole. Clearly there is a strong commitment to ensuring that such teaching takes place, and academic staff reported taking advantage of the nature of the University's portfolio of disciplines to engage in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teaching.

The panel was not so clear if there was a shared institution-wide understanding of 'interdisciplinary' and 'multidisciplinary' when applied to student *learning*. From the examples given to the panel, there appeared to be an emphasis on multidisciplinary teaching – that is, working in parallel with team teaching of students, and with the placing of elements of a range of disciplines within one subject before students. It was not clear to the panel either the extent of the integration of disciplines, or the pedagogical basis and understanding of these two terms.

RECOMMENDATION

R 2 The panel recommends that the University facilitates an institution-wide discussion on the pedagogical basis and understanding of 'interdisciplinary' and 'multidisciplinary' teaching and learning to ensure a transparency in their application.

3.3 REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

The self-review reports that, in recent years, programme review activity has been built around the collection, monitoring and analysis of key performance indicators – Effective Full-Time Students, student numbers, complete withdrawals, entrance level, pass rates, completions. There is an annual review of institutional performance of all programmes which is used as a guide as to where improvements should be targeted – self review, student surveys, employer feedback and external reviews (particularly those required by professional accreditation). The panel was not

able to discern the mechanisms for feeding through information from reviews into curriculum development and staff interviewed were not able to elaborate on this point.

More formal programme reviews are conducted where, for example, unexplained changes in performance occurs. The panel was pleased to note that the University is continually monitoring the relevance of the review process, and that its guidelines, policy and procedures related to review activity are being developed for approval by the Academic Board during 2006. The University recognises that it might be helpful to review all undergraduate degree programmes according to a regular cycle or schedule, and appropriate policy, procedures and guidelines are being developed.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

1.3 Complete programme review activity for the programmes or disciplinary areas timetabled for 2006.

1.4 Develop new programmes/disciplinary areas and student markets.

The panel supports these initiatives. The panel presumes that the development of any new programmes and disciplinary areas is understood to be part of the University's ongoing monitoring of the profile of programmes offered to consider whether the University should withdraw from some areas to re-invest in other areas in line with the needs of students and subjects and alignment with the University's vision.

3.4 STUDENT DIVERSITY AND SUPPORT

The student profile has changed over the six years 2000-2005. Domestic Equivalent Full-Time Student numbers have fallen from 2,380 to 1,673; international students have risen from 547 to 1,722. Over the same period, part-time enrolments have increased from 899 students to 1,525.

The panel was told by students about the many positive factors that characterise the University. Some factors are related to scale and size, accessibility of academic and support staff, and the applied nature of the academic programmes. The University's situation near the small town of Lincoln and 30 minutes from Christchurch has advantages of a strong community spirit assisted by halls of residence in which students have a good sense of belonging. Disadvantages are mostly social, and in terms of easy and immediate physical access to the facilities of a city.

The Student Learning Centre – which is part of Teaching and Learning Services – provides support for students to help them learn how to study more effectively. Students normally self-identify, although in some cases the academic staff identify difficulties and encourage students to seek assistance. During 2006, the University has been reviewing Teaching and Learning Services, student support provided by Divisions, Student Health and Support, Lincoln University Students' Association activities, Student Learning Centre, chaplaincy services, as well as the Centre for Māori and Indigenous Planning and Development, to ensure differentiation and complementary support from the various agencies. The support services themselves survey students to ensure their services are relevant, and are proactive in making their services known in Divisions.

Students reported satisfaction with the access and assistance provided by the Student Learning Centre which endeavours to make appropriate strategic use of finite resources.

COMMENDATION

C 6 The panel commends the University for the commitment and competence of student support staff.

Arising from its ongoing review of student learning support, the University has initiatives which **the panel supports**, particularly with respect to the nature, and relationship, of academic and pastoral support.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

- 4.1 *Improve non-study spaces and facilities for students.*
- 4.4 *Review the provision of academic support and pastoral support services across the University to ensure differentiation and complementarity of roles.*
- 8.3 *Implement on-line course information, application and enrolment solutions.*

The Inclusive Education Co-ordinator provides support for students with disabilities or other special requirements. The Co-ordinator undertakes diagnostic work and has funding under the government's Special Supplementary Grant to purchase specialist equipment. The Co-ordinator also oversees special examination facilities for students with special needs.

There is a class representative system through which students can communicate feedback to teaching staff. From interviews, it appeared that the class representatives system operated as a mechanism to identify concerns. The Lincoln University Students' Association, who administer the scheme, considered the performance of the system was patchy across the University, but was important for picking up problems. It was difficult for the panel to find examples where the system was used to facilitate positive feedback, although the panel was assured that the system can be effective when things go wrong, and a 'negative', when picked up, can lead to a positive outcome. The University should consider ways of making the class representative system develop positive interactions and liaison between students and staff, and work with the Lincoln University Students' Association to improve the effectiveness across the University of staff-student consultation processes.

RECOMMENDATION

R 3 The panel recommends that the University reviews the effectiveness of staff-student consultation processes across the University.

The small scale of the University puts limits on the numbers of support staff, yet the University has to supply the same range of services as do larger universities. The University has indicated that student grades are monitored and scrutinised carefully each year. From 2004, students with performance below an acceptable standard have been encouraged to seek learning assistance. From 2006, students with performance below an acceptable standard are being encouraged to seek learning assistance.

There was a suggestion made to the panel that ideally attention to students at risk should happen early in the students' enrolment. Support services recognise that, for various reasons, the University could do better to identify students at risk – such as those with learning difficulties, international students settling in to the University – earlier in their time at the University, and to provide timely intervention to support them in their learning. International students in particular face issues and situations in New Zealand that are different from their expectations, and it would be good if the University had the resources to develop a more co-ordinated approach to the

support of international students. The University has indicated that it is taking initiatives related to a project aimed at enhancing the student experience, and the panel encourages the University to build on processes in place.

RECOMMENDATION

R 4 The panel recommends that the University enhances its processes to identify students at risk academically, in support of the University's student-centred philosophy.

3.5 POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

Interviews with staff and students indicated a commitment to a high level of support for postgraduate students. The University has initiatives with respect to student recruitment, support, and the administration associated with postgraduate programmes.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

2.1 *Continue the postgraduate student recruitment focus.*

2.3 *Improve support for postgraduate students.*

4.5 *Improve administrative processes, including those associated with postgraduate applications and admissions, thesis examination, Academic Administration Committee, field trips, international student admissions.*

The panel supports these initiatives. With respect to Initiative 4.5, the University might also review the timing of orientation to ensure access by postgraduate research students who enrol at times other than at the commencement of semesters.

The University has recently considered and approved recommendations contained in reports from two working groups with respect to the supervision of postgraduate research students, and the University has adopted 'house rules' for study at PhD and Master degrees. In 2005, services and support levels provided to postgraduate students were reviewed. The University is responding to the perception of current shortcomings and their stated possible solutions, as identified in the November 2005 *Supervision taskgroup final report*. The issues and recommendations include: the areas of commitment and support for postgraduate students; the 'best practice' professional development and staff mentoring; transparency and accountability in the appointment of supervisors; and meeting the needs of postgraduate students as expressed in a Minimum Services Provision document which outlines service levels with respect to postgraduate culture and support, computing, workspace, Library and supervision. **The panel encourages** the University to ensure the recommendations are implemented; once implemented, the solutions should provide improved monitoring of the quality of thesis supervision generally.

There was an indication from interviews of different Divisional postgraduate cultures, and the panel noted that in some cases Divisions assumed that the practices they deployed were institution-wide, when discussions suggested that was not the case. There was also the question as to whether policies and procedures are always as clear to students as they seem to be to staff. For example, staff were surprised to be told that students regarded procedures related to postgraduate supervision as complex and unclear and not always effective; and staff referred to the existence of postgraduate handbooks which contained all the information that students might want.

The principal supervisor is always a member of the staff of the University, and the panel was assured that associate supervisors who are 'external' to the University – for example, staff at a

Crown Research Institute – are known to the University, although it is not clear as to the extent to which such supervisors external to the University are formally inducted into the University’s research supervision culture.

3.6 RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS

The applied nature of the disciplines encourages the application of theory to practice. The hosting of a national Centre of Research Excellence has had a beneficial impact on research and the research-teaching nexus in related University subject areas. There is a strong commitment by the University to students gaining real-life experiences within the teaching and learning programme, with the involvement of teachers from a variety of specialist areas, the use of computer programmes used in industry, placement work (which is more formally assessed at postgraduate level) and the teaching of students about real-world experience. Students who were interviewed appreciated the application of theory in field trips, work practice and work placements.

There was a variety of views expressed about the impact on staff time for teaching-related tasks arising from the introduction of the Performance-Based Research Fund. At postgraduate level in particular, and in more applied subjects, there is a high staff contact with students, and concerns were expressed about the potential for the needs of research, particularly given the pressure for research publications, to impact negatively on teaching practice. The Fund criteria are not so accommodating of interdisciplinary research which is characteristic of the University. This pressure and the associated incidence of increased workloads for staff are recognised by the University. Teaching and Learning Services noted that the number of staff who attend their courses on teaching are not as high as those who attend courses that relate to their research activities.

3.7 FLEXIBLE LEARNING

The self-review portfolio acknowledges that the University:

needs to reconcile the learner expectation of flexible learning (including e-learning, regional education, summer school, timetable, delivery styles and modes) with staff needs and potential markets.

The panel learned that some of these areas are currently being reviewed, and therefore much in the self-review portfolio in this area remains aspirational. The *learn@lincoln* platform, in operation from 1997, has been converted recently to Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) – an open-source e-learning platform or course management system. The panel was given a demonstration of Moodle and was interested in the growing level of uptake. Moodle is of particular assistance to part-time students and in the provision of materials and on-line support for distance/off-campus learners involved in Regional Education.

Students have high expectations of information communication technologies, and staff require support and professional development to make best use of the resources in place and planned for introduction, especially associated with Moodle. The development of this resource will require careful monitoring of the quality of learning materials, and the adaptation of learning practice with the greater integration of on-line processes. Group Leaders are responsible for staff use of Moodle, and staff are assisted by Teaching and Learning Services. The University needs to maintain expertise within Teaching and Learning Services to assist staff develop good ideas in ways most appropriate to their use on Moodle.

3.8 REGIONAL EDUCATION

‘Regional Education’ describes undergraduate off-campus learning programmes. The distinctive nature of this University’s off-campus learning is that the University employs learning co-ordinators and tutors in the students’ regions of residence to present face-to-face workshops, tutorials, laboratories and field studies. The main offerings in Regional Education are selected diploma subjects, degree subjects, and professional masters programmes, and the University strives for a teaching and learning and student experience consistent with on-campus students to the greatest extent possible.

Regional Education students are subject to the same tests and examinations as for internally-delivered subjects; tests and examinations are marked at Lincoln. Regional Education extends the reach and opportunities for students in rural and remote communities in New Zealand. The panel was told of the high investment of staff time needed to provide materials for relatively small numbers of students enrolled. The panel understands that consideration is being given to pulling back on Regional Education as a separate exercise and to integrate it into the work of the Divisions. The panel also notes that the University’s *Profile* reports that future developments include investigating opportunities to establish additional partnerships with New Zealand-based organisations particularly through Regional Education programmes.

3.9 INTERNATIONALISATION

For many years, the University has had a high proportion of international students – 48 percent across the University in 2005 – and therefore has appreciated the need to develop processes to support their special needs. The University closely monitors the performance of international students against the performance of domestic students. The impact of international students varies across Divisions, with the largest Division, Commerce, having international students comprising 66.3 percent of its total Equivalent Full-time Students. Some classes – in computing in particular – have very high percentages of international students. Staff and students spoke of the need for the adaptation of the content and delivery to classes with large percentages of international students so that they are meaningful to the international student majority as well as to the domestic minority.

The University’s approach is for everyone across the University to have responsibility for international students, and there are initiatives which should assist in the greater integration of international students and their cultures. **The panel supports** these initiatives and considers it desirable to continue to have people in Divisions and Teaching and Learning Services specifically dedicated to advising and supporting international students. Other initiatives in this area include recruitment and student exchange programmes.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

- 4.3 *Enhance the cultural awareness programme to promote, amongst staff and students, a deeper understanding of the significance and diversity of cultures within the Lincoln University community.*
- 7.1 *Implement the International Student Recruitment Plan.*
- 7.2 *Review reciprocal student exchange programmes.*

International students interviewed told the panel that the University staff are approachable, and that specific types of assistance and feedback to students on progress is forthcoming when asked for. From a teaching perspective, international students come from a variety of teaching and

learning environments, and staff experience a large variability in the willingness of students to participate in class with consequent impact on collaborative and group work.

Students appreciated the presence of the International Student Advisory Service which supports international students, can advocate on their behalf, and advises students on where they can best access assistance. With such large proportions of international students, there are inevitably examples of students who have difficulty in settling in and fitting into a new academic environment and culture. Students suggested that more use could be made of the knowledge and experience of 'senior' international students in order to understand international students better to the benefit of new students, particularly those from some cultures who are reluctant to make concerns known to agencies within the University. In addition, there was the suggestion that there might be ongoing support beyond the formal orientation, perhaps through a 'buddy' or mentoring system.

An important preparation for students is provided by the Foundation Studies and English Language Centre which delivers language and study skills courses for international students in particular. The panel heard in interviews with highly focussed staff from the Centre about how they work to ensure the relevance of the content and delivery of its courses and to ensure it plays a fundamental role in the preparation of students for whom English is not their first language for entry into University certificate, diploma and degree programmes. Students enrolled in Foundation courses are regarded as University students and have access to all teaching and learning facilities. The panel was impressed by the reported quality and relevance of the Foundation and English language courses. The University is aware that it must recognise that students entering the University through different means may well have different English language needs.

COMMENDATION

C 7 The panel commends the University for the quality and relevance of courses delivered by the Foundation Studies and English Language Centre.

Another aspect of internationalisation is collaborations offshore. The University has been very selective about collaborations in teaching and learning, with two Masters degrees jointly taught and awarded with European universities. Teaching of programmes offshore is undertaken by a mixture of Lincoln and out-sourced teaching and tutor support. Such programmes must meet the same quality criteria as all University programmes and degrees, particularly with respect to the quality of teaching and the teaching standards of teachers, admission, assessment, teaching and moderation processes.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVE FOR 2006

7.3 Investigate new off-shore delivery opportunities.

3.10 THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

At the time of the audit, the University was making a major investment in the Library with the development of an information commons and integrated Library collection, providing more space for student study and group work, and improved facilities for on-line retrieval. Students enjoy reciprocal access to local tertiary and other university libraries, and postgraduates have access to inter-library loan services. First-year undergraduates undergo a compulsory Library Skills session, and information literacy modules are incorporated into several degree programmes.

The panel visited the Library for the demonstration of Moodle, and was impressed with the quality of student learning facilities in the Library which is very much a central learning place for students.

COMMENDATION

C 8 The panel commends the University for the quality of the student learning facilities in the Library, and for the University's responsiveness to its development in information communications technology and to meeting students' expectations of learning in a technology-rich environment.

The Library employs a number of processes (surveys, focus groups) to gain feedback to check on the extent to which Library services are relevant and effective. Library staff teach into academic programmes, particularly in the areas of information literacy, and Library staff would like more time to work with academic staff to develop skills in improving the pedagogical use of technology.

The panel supports the commitment of the University to the further work associated with student learning support by bringing together resources in an information commons.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

4.2 *Redevelop the Library to establish the 'information commons'.*

Another key agency in teaching and learning is Information Technology Services which provides essential support for staff and students as teaching and learning comes to rely more and more on information technologies and electronic learning technologies. The Help Desk and Student Contact Centre, staffed by volunteer students, provide frontline assistance. Information Technology Services uses various focus groups to monitor the infrastructure to ensure priority activities can be maintained and expectations met to the extent to which funding permits.

Key to effective teaching and learning is the effective interaction and co-operation between the Library and Information Technology Services. The Library administers growing holdings of electronic resources and supports off-campus and distance learning associated with Regional Education. The Information Technology Services places an importance on providing the technology infrastructure for this as well as other Library services as part of its wider responsibilities to the University.

COMMENDATION

C 9 The panel commends the University for the strong operational relationship between the Library and Information Technology Services.

3.11 SUBJECT EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

The University has three surveys to provide student feedback.

The *Graduate Feedback Survey* gathers information about graduates' perceptions of the quality of the qualifications they completed in the previous year – the quality of teaching, the clarity of goals and standards, the nature of assessment, workload, the enhancement of generic skills, and overall satisfaction.

The *Undergraduate Student Satisfaction Survey* gathers information about student satisfaction and importance in a variety of areas – enrolment and registration, academic courses, student services, university environment, computing facilities, library services, and overall satisfaction.

The *Postgraduate Student Satisfaction Survey* gathers information from research students about supervision, programme organisation, research culture, computing facilities, library services, students services, university environment, and overall satisfaction.

At Subject level, evaluations are mandatory, carried out biennially, with questions about the organisation and delivery of subject content, delivery methods and assessment.

Such a range of surveys provides a lot of information on performance, and the University is aware of the cost of these surveys and possible student survey fatigue. Consequently, the University is considering a move toward more detailed questioning about student engagement with learning. The panel was told by Teaching and Learning Services that they report to the University on the top evaluations, but that there are no formal interventions in the case of low rating evaluations. The University acknowledges that responding to feedback from students is essential, and the panel agrees. From interviews, the panel came to the view that the extent to which students were aware of the nature of the use made of survey information was variable. The panel was also of the view that the University could be more proactive about telling students about use made of feedback from earlier students in the enhancement of Subjects, thus making clear the extent to which the student voice is heard and acted on where appropriate.

4

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

4.1 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

The University's Graduate Profiles set out the expectations and graduate attributes for each academic programme. These include personal attributes, interactive attributes (communication, interpersonal skills) and specific programme attributes. Subject Outlines set out learning outcomes for each subject. The self-review process associated with this audit had increased academic staff awareness of graduate outcomes and the ways the attributes are assessed in academic programmes. The University has monitored the extent to which graduates believe the University programme has met their expectations through the administration and analysis of the Graduate Feedback Survey, and is working to complete and update a register of graduate profiles as a result of findings from the self-review for this audit.

The University is now investigating ways to demonstrate the links between teaching and student learning outcomes, which suggests that the University recognises that there is a sense that these attributes or competencies have been produced in an implicit way.

COMMENDATION

C 10 The panel commends the University for the commitment to ensuring a realistic fit between statements of graduate attributes and teaching and student learning outcomes.

4.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The University maintains active links with communities of interest, especially agricultural industries, environmental agencies, a number of Crown Research Institutes and other research providers (many of which are in the Lincoln area) and agencies in Christchurch city. Stakeholders interviewed by the panel perceive graduates as having a good grounding in basic and applied sciences combined with a business sense and ability, and have an openness to new ideas. Stakeholders found academic staff to be accessible and easy to interact with in areas of their particular needs and interests. The University is seen as being very quick to respond to invitations to take part in projects.

The University recognises the need for its research, teaching and learning to be informed by such interactions. This is supported by the University's first *Community and industry engagement statement 2006-2009*. This statement provides a framework for managing community and industry engagement, strategies, activities, initiatives and processes for the University. The statement sits alongside, and is aligned to, other planning documents, and declares the University's commitment to strengthening and co-ordinating its community engagement activities, identifying priority segments and groups, mapping capabilities and needs, measuring success and benchmarking.

The University has two major initiatives arising from the statement.

UNIVERSITY MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2006

- 3.1 *Review existing community engagement activities and assess the role of community engagement across the University, in line with the Community Engagement Plan.*
- 3.2 *Implement activity in line with the Community Engagement Plan, targeting key groups and organisations.*

The statement appears to be focussed on what it describes as ‘indirect’ engagement, but the statement also suggests a much stronger link with curriculum development and design.

The key element [of the statement] is that engagement implies a genuine partnership and that the institution is prepared to reshape and redesign their teaching and research activities to become actively linked with the specified communities. . . . It is also important to recognise the contribution of community engagement to the core teaching and research activities of the University.

From the self-review portfolio and interviews, it would appear that interaction outside of professional accreditation processes and academic programme reviews is informal rather than formal. The panel was told of work with professional groups, usually associated with the needs of professional accreditation, and the use of guest lecturers from Crown Research Institute staff in teaching and research activity, consultancy, advice and contributions by staff to social debate. While appreciating the networking that takes place, the panel considers that it would be desirable to have more formal avenues for input into curriculum of appropriate courses at the time of its design and development and not just at times of academic programme review, especially given that the University is committed to an applied approach to teaching and learning. The panel was unable to find any evidence of the way the stakeholder view was fed into the curriculum, nor were the stakeholders themselves able to provide the panel with concrete examples.

RECOMMENDATION

R5 The panel recommends that the University reviews and makes transparent the mechanisms used to gain stakeholder input into the design, development and review of curriculum, and thereby provide greater use of information arising from progress on University Major Initiatives 3.1 and 3.2 concerning community engagement.

4.3 ASSESSMENT

The succinct Assessment Policy is supplemented by a number of related policies and procedures. The Assessment Policy sets out the expectation that assessment assesses the progressive academic achievement of students, encourages academic excellence, provides regular feedback to students on their progress, includes tasks that enable students to apply their learning, and measures each student’s proficiency. The guidelines offer ways of meeting the University’s assessment objectives and making links between learning and assessment.

Grade distribution is monitored by the University, and the University insists that grade distributions, student performance and pass rates provide an indication of the effectiveness of subject performance, and that the processes of subject grade scrutiny assures the University that standards are applied.

The University understands the need to assist students to integrate elements and to look more widely than at single issues, through, for example, group work and group project work. The panel heard from students that they appreciate and enjoy the practical side of teaching associated

with applied subjects with an applied focus. The panel heard from staff about the challenge to link assessment effectively to both learning outcomes and learning styles, and about Teaching and Learning Services' assistance to staff to develop assessment best suited to the learning outcomes, particularly in subjects that have an applied focus.

4.4 BENCHMARKING

The University shares information and data with selected institutions, monitors graduate employment rates through the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Graduate Destinations Survey, and the University's Graduate Feedback Survey. The University recruits staff nationally and internationally, who benchmark against peers through research and teaching opportunities. There is a notable reliance on programme reviews which have representatives from other universities and therefore offer opportunities to benchmark. Accreditation by professional bodies provides external verification of curriculum content and standards, but it is recognised that such activity is focussed on the requirements best suited to the professional bodies associated with the registration of graduates.

Benchmarking, therefore, is obtained in a variety of informal ways. Public reputation and word-of-mouth recommendations, the performance of graduates, the success of graduates in gaining scholarships, fellowships and employment in other institutions all provide the University with an understanding of its comparative academic standing. The panel is of the view, however, that the University would benefit from a clearly-enunciated institution-wide understanding of benchmarking in teaching and learning, and more formal processes for the benchmarking of the quality of teaching and student learning, student support services and the internationalisation of curriculum.

RECOMMENDATION

R 6 The panel recommends that the University develops an institution-wide understanding of benchmarking in teaching and learning and develops more formal processes to enhance national and international benchmarking of teaching and learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The panel thanks Professor Roger Field, Vice-Chancellor, and Professor Sheelagh Matear, Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), for support of the audit process, and for the University's warm welcome to the audit panel. The panel also thanks Elizabeth Bean, Manager, Planning and Quality, as well as those who contributed to the University's self-review and compilation of the self-review portfolio and the organisation associated with the Audit Visit. The panel is grateful for the openness and frankness of those who gave of their time to appear before the panel.

AUDIT PANEL

Chair of the Panel

Professor David Mackay, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Victoria University of Wellington

New Zealand academic member of the Panel

Associate Professor Marion Jones, Associate Dean Postgraduate, Faculty of Health and Environmental Science, Auckland University of Technology

Former New Zealand academic member of the Panel

Emeritus Professor Don McGregor, Consultant, Wellington

New Zealand non-academic member of the Panel

Mike Stevens, Taiaho Ltd, Kaikohe

Overseas member of the Panel

Professor Judyth Sachs, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), University of Sydney, Australia

In attendance:

John M. Jennings, Director, New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit

APPENDIX 1

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

Lincoln University was founded in 1878 as a School of Agriculture. It offered its first degree in 1896 and was later incorporated into the University of New Zealand as the Canterbury Agricultural College. In 1961 it became a constituent College of the University of Canterbury and was renamed Lincoln College. Lincoln University was deemed an autonomous university in 1990.

Today Lincoln University is a specialised, research-led university focussed on providing the best learning and research opportunities for New Zealanders and for people from around the world. Lincoln University is recognised for its applied and interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research in agriculture, the physical and biological sciences, commerce and the environment, including social dimensions. Lincoln University is structured around four academic Divisions:

- Commerce
- Environment, Society and Design
- Agriculture and Life Sciences
- Bio-Protection and Ecology.

The Foundation Studies and English Language Centre delivers academic preparation courses to prepare students for entry as undergraduate students, as well as courses in academic English language.

DIVISION	STUDENTS		STAFF		Ratio EFTStudent to EFTAcademic Staff
	<i>Equivalent Full-Time Students</i>	<i>International students as percentage</i>	<i>Equivalent Full-Time Staff Academic</i>	<i>Non-academic</i>	
Commerce	1,442	66.3	52.9	15.1	27.3
Environment, Society and Design	858	45.7	63.7	15.3	13.5
Agriculture and Life Sciences	762	20.7	66.1	76.9	11.5
Bio-Protection and Ecology	121	20.1	19.7	35.3	6.1
Foundation Studies and English Language Centre	180	95.0	14.8	4.2	12.2
Totals	3,363	50.6	217.2	146.8	15.5
<i>Percentage of total EFT Students enrolled in postgraduate degrees</i>					11.3

Source: Lincoln University website, and *Academic audit portfolio 2006*

APPENDIX 2

NEW ZEALAND UNIVERSITIES ACADEMIC AUDIT UNIT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To consider and review the universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the ongoing academic quality of academic programmes, their delivery and their learning outcomes, and the extent to which the universities are achieving their stated aims and objectives in these areas.
- To comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities are applied effectively.
- To comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities reflect good practice in maintaining quality.
- To identify and commend to universities national and international good practice in regard to academic quality assurance and quality enhancement.
- To assist the university sector to improve its educational quality.
- To advise the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee on quality assurance matters.
- To carry out such contract work as is compatible with its audit role.

The Unit acts as a fully independent body in the conduct of its audit activities.

VISION

- To have contributed to the achievement of quality, quality enhancement and excellence in New Zealand universities as measured by the improved quality of their scholarly activities and outcomes – namely, research, teaching, learning and community service provided by their graduates and staff to the measurable benefit of people and societies both inside and outside of New Zealand.

OBJECTIVE WITH RESPECT TO ACADEMIC AUDITS CONDUCTED DURING THE PERIOD 2003-2006

- To have successfully administered audits of all New Zealand universities and to have produced audit reports which are acknowledged as being authoritative, rigorous, fair and perceptive and which are acknowledged by the universities as being of assistance to them in improving their own programmes of continuous improvement of quality and added value.

APPENDIX 3

CYCLE 3 FOCUS

GENERAL

With respect to teaching quality, programme delivery, and the achievement of learning outcomes, how does the institution ensure:

- the effective involvement of students, staff and other communities of interest in the review and improvement of plans, strategies, regulations, policies and guidelines?
- the effective implementation of institutional, college, division, Faculty and School plans, strategies, regulations, policies and guidelines?
- the taking into account of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi?
- appropriate lines of responsibility and allocation of resources to planning and monitoring?

TEACHING QUALITY

Assignment of staff

How does the institution ensure:

- the most appropriate and effective assignment of staff to teaching in programmes at various levels?
- the appropriate balance of staff time in teaching, research, administration, consulting and community activities?

Development of teaching competence

How does the institution ensure:

- effective development of individual teachers through activities that characterise, recognise, enhance and reward teaching quality?
- effective support for staff to review teaching practices and to develop appropriate skills and expertise and to explore and apply a range of flexible and innovative learning methodologies including e-learning?

Evaluation of teaching

How does the institution ensure:

- effective evaluation of the quality of teaching?
- the appropriate support and advice for those (both students and staff) involved in the evaluation of the quality of teaching?

Feedback

How does the institution ensure:

- effective feedback to teachers and students?
- effective application of feedback into the enhancement of teaching?

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Context

How does the institution ensure:

- effective understanding by staff of regulations, policies and guidelines related to teaching, assessment and workload?
- effective understanding by students of course and assessment requirements, learning opportunities, study skills support and access to facilities and resources?

Design

How does the institution ensure:

- effective design of the teaching of courses to use ways most appropriate for the discipline, levels of courses, learning outcomes, student preparation and student learning styles?
- effective use of an appropriate range of teaching methods that incorporate flexible and innovative learning methodologies including e-learning?
- effective realisation of links between research and teaching?
- effective provision and use of facilities and services in support of student learning?

Evaluation

How does the institution ensure:

- effective evaluation of the quality of the learning environment?
- the most appropriate support and advice for those involved in the evaluation of the quality of the learning environment?

Feedback

How does the institution ensure:

- effective feedback to teachers and students?
- effective application of feedback into the enhancement of the learning environment?

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

How does the institution ensure:

- the alignment of learning outcomes in programmes and courses with the institution's goals and objectives for teaching and learning?
- the application of appropriate and effective assessment practices in testing the achievement of learning outcomes?
- the excellence of scholarly standards of achievement?
- effective benchmarking of standards nationally and internationally?