

Cycle 6 Academic Audit

The report of the **Cycle 6 academic audit of Te Whare Wānaka o Lincoln University** was released on 18 June 2024. It is available on the AQA website. The audit panel made a total of 9 commendations, 13 affirmations and 18 recommendations.

The final two Cycle 6 academic audits are underway with the panels for the University of Otago | Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka and Auckland University of Technology Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau (AUT) both having held their first panel meetings.

Moving to a new model of academic audit in New Zealand's university sector

Summarised from an [article](#) by Professor Cheryl de la Rey, Chair of Universities New Zealand.

AQA has served the university sector and the country extremely well (as evidenced by its positive external reviews) in its 30 years of existence. Very challenging financial headwinds mean that the Vice-Chancellors believe it is now time for a different model.

The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) remains committed to academic audit as a concept. It is valuable for the universities themselves – periodically leading them to look holistically at their quality arrangements and to ensure they remain fit for purpose. It is also valuable for external audiences – having an independent validation of the quality of our publicly funded universities.

We are currently in the sixth audit cycle, which is scheduled to run for over eight years. Earlier audit cycles ranged from 3-6 years. The audit cycles have grown longer over time as our university sector has matured. Audit findings have mainly confirmed a continued commitment to quality across all eight of our universities.

NZVCC now want to look at whether future cycles of academic audit can be done in a way that reduces complexity and cost without compromising quality and value.

With that in mind, the Vice-Chancellors have taken the following decisions:

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AQA | About

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

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

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

- The final two audits of Cycle 6 (Otago and AUT) will be completed by the current board. Once complete (December 2024), the AQA Board will end its tenure and the organisation will be wound up as an independent entity.
- The other elements of Cycle 6 (four one-year follow up reviews, and an overall review of Cycle 6) will be carried out during 2025 by a sub-committee of the newly established Learning and Teaching Committee of Universities New Zealand (UNZ).
- There will be a Cycle 7 and it will maintain the eight-year cycle for academic audit.
- The design of Cycle 7 will follow the review of Cycle 6.

Current audit arrangements meet all the requirements of INQAAHE for international recognition as an External Quality Assurance Provider. NZVCC intend to continue to maintain INQAAHE recognition.

The Vice-Chancellors accept that there will be some additional risk associated with moving to a different model of quality assurance but intend that these risks will be appropriately managed at the time new arrangements are defined.

The Vice-Chancellors are deeply grateful to AQA's Executive Director Sheelagh Matear and the AQA Board for their role in ensuring our university sector has had a strong and effective academic audit function.

The full article can be found [here](#).

From the Chair of the AQA Board

The timing of this newsletter corresponds with the conclusion of Emeritus Professor Sheelagh Matear's term as Executive Director of AQA. Sheelagh has been in the role since late February 2016 and, during the last eight years, has provided outstanding leadership of quality assurance in the New Zealand university sector and been instrumental in the design and execution of Cycle 6 and the related enhancement theme exercises.

In addition to her work within the New Zealand sector, Sheelagh has also made highly significant contributions to quality assurance in the Asia-Pacific region and to international scholarly literature in the field. I am sure that all those who have worked with Sheelagh over the years will join the Board in wishing her every happiness for her life after AQA.

The Board has been most grateful to Sheelagh for her willingness to defer her retirement from the AQA executive directorship until arrangements were in place for completing Cycle 6 site visits and reports. Sheelagh will have responsibility on a contract basis for site visits and report writing and Rochelle Gribble will be seconded from UNZ to manage other aspects of AQA business as acting executive director. These arrangements, which will come into place from 1 July 2024 will help to ensure the continuity and maintain the integrity of key aspects of the Cycle 6 processes.

For reasons which are explained in the announcement from Professor Cheryl de la Rey, this will be the last issue of the AQA newsletter. Over the course of the next six months, the AQA Board will oversee the last 2 site visits in Cycle 6, the completion of the audit reports for the University of Otago and Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau, and the disestablishment of AQA.

In noting Professor de la Rey's comments on the contributions made by AQA to the New Zealand university sector, I wish to record my appreciation of the work of successive directors and board members and the large number of auditors who have brought their expertise and commitment to the six audit cycles for which AQA has been responsible.

Emeritus Professor John Morrow

From the Executive Director

This final newsletter also marks the end of my time as the Executive Director for AQA. I'll continue to support the completion of the audits in Cycle 6 on a contract basis but will be stepping back from the management of AQA. There will be no change to the planned interactions or operation of the remaining audits to be completed or support for the panels undertaking those audits. However, the newsletter also gives me an opportunity to reflect on the last eight years and thank a lot of people.

The first group I'd like to thank are the quality managers in the universities. They were the first group the initial proposal for Cycle 6 was presented to, they worked through multiple iterations to develop the Cycle 6 academic audit framework and, of course, play leading roles in preparing universities for academic audit and ensuring audit processes run smoothly. The second set of people to thank are the members of audit panels. It has been a fabulous opportunity to work with insightful and committed auditors and I have learnt a huge amount from them all. I also thank those who were appointed to the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers but who did not have an opportunity to serve on a panel.

Undertaking academic audits is a rewarding activity. The ability to see an entire sector's commitment to academic quality is a very privileged position. However, I have particularly valued two aspects of Cycle 6 – the enhancement theme and working with students. The enhancement theme learnt from the well-established Scottish model of enhancement themes, but the topic chosen – Access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and Pacific students – and the way in which it was operationalised very much reflected the Aotearoa New Zealand context. The two enhancement theme symposia are real highlights to look back on and I feel great satisfaction at having had the opportunity to be part of them.

Working with students has become an accepted and normal part of practice for AQA. There has been a student member of the AQA Board since its establishment and a nominee from Te Mana Ākonga has since joined the Board. We also now have student members of audit panels.

I would also like to thank a series of people who have worked with AQA over the years, in particular Tiana Mihaere, Hana Meinders-Sykes, Sam Smith and Bex Meinders-Sykes. Tiana set out our first steps to becoming a Te Tiriti o Waitangi-responsive organisation and Hana established a sound policy and strategy base from which to build. Sam's work on developing guidance for working with students in quality has become a core part of auditor training and is being used by institutions in Aotearoa and beyond. Special thanks to Bex who has managed these newsletters and the AQA website and kept AQA's communications function working.

Finally, my thanks to the AQA Board, in particular the two chairs of the Board I worked alongside – Emeritus Professor Pat Walsh and Emeritus Professor John Morrow. They, with other members of the Board, have guided, critiqued and supported my work at AQA and ensured that AQA's work remains worthy of its international recognition and continues to deliver value to universities and their students.

Emeritus Professor Sheelagh Matear

Acting Executive Director

Rochelle Gribble will be acting Executive Director of AQA from July to December 2024 and the AQA Board in this capacity. Sheelagh and Rochelle will jointly support site visits for the audits in the cycle. Rochelle's email is Rochelle.Gribble@qa.ac.nz.



Have You Seen This?

Background papers and other resources from work on the Australian Universities Accord, including a report on **future disruptions**, options for **enhancing the quality of teaching and learning**, and an international comparison of selected tertiary education systems are available **here**.

Associated with the Accord, the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (**ACSES**) hosted its inaugural **symposium**. Session recordings will be available soon.

Changes to quality assurance arrangements in other jurisdictions are ongoing. The Scottish Funding Council has released a new **Outcomes Framework and Assurance model** for the sector. QAA Scotland has also published an **evaluation of 20 years of enhancement themes**.

Staying with system-level analyses, the French High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres) has published an analysis of **trends in institutional evaluation frameworks** in the European Higher Education Area.

Recent academic papers which may be of interest include an analysis of **assessment in taught master's degrees** in the UK, an excellent article on the **educational integrity enforcement pyramid** by Cath Ellis and Kane Murdoch (open access), and from closer to home, papers by Martin Boswell, Stephen Marshall and Kate Thornton on **Quality assurance dysfunctions** and Bjørn Stensaker and myself on **Student involvement in quality assurance** (open access).

Meetings and Conference Calendar

8-11 July 2024

Adelaide

HERDSA **Conference**

22-25 September 2024

Brisbane

Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) **Conference**

24-25 October 2024

Placeholder

2024 **CAULLT** Conference

12-13 November 2024

Melbourne (details TBA)

TEQSA **Conference**

14-16 November 2024

University of Twente, Netherlands

European Quality Assurance **Forum** (EQAF)

18-20 November 2024

Adelaide

AAIR **Forum**

13-16 May 2025

Tokyo, Japan

INQAAHE **Conference** 2025

25-28 May 2025

The Higher Education Technology Agenda (THETA) biennial conference

Winds of Change

Ngā mihi maioha

AQA would like to thank the readers of these newsletters and everyone who has worked with us for your continued support over the years.

Hei konā rā.



AQA | Academic
Quality Agency
For New Zealand Universities

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

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