AN AUDIT PERSPECTIVE, 1995-1998

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New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit

Te Wahanga Tatari Kaute Tohungatanga
o nga Whare Wananga o Aotearoa

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Background

The Academic Audit Unit (AAU) audited the seven universities during the period 1995-1998, beginning with Victoria University of Wellington, which submitted its audit portfolio to the AAU in February 1996, and ending with Lincoln University, whose audit report was published in June 1998. This overview is based on the seven audit reports and is therefore a historical document. It presents a snapshot of aspects of the university sector in the period 1995 to 1998. Even within this period, it is more of a video than a still, because the universities have been changing constantly: in anticipation of audit, in response to audit, in response to the changing environment, and through continuing initiatives. Despite its historical character, this overview should be of value, as it deals with issues that frequently recur in different ways and different guises.

In several audit portfolios, submitted by the universities as a result of their self-audit, they identified actions already planned as a result of what the self-audit revealed. The AAU was always pleased to note this, as it is a major, intended, outcome from the audit process.

In interpreting the following comments, it must be remembered that (as always in quality audit) successes and shortcomings are identified as such by comparison with the institution's own goals, not some normative or idealised universal template. The goals themselves have some element of a template or ideal, in that they are consistent with the generally accepted character of a university, and also address statutory requirements. Also, some people would argue that universities should be taking a lead in matters of social responsibility, such as equity issues for their own staff, and such expectations imply some desirable characteristics of university goals.

Text in double quotation marks is taken verbatim from an audit report. References to the individual universities are indicative only, and are far from complete or exhaustive. They are intended as examples and to give the flavour of the AAU's findings. Sampling during each audit means that not all good and bad features were found in every audit, and there has been a further selectivity in the production of this publication.

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Wellington
April 1999

David Woodhouse
Director
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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this report.

AAU	Academic Audit Unit
AU	The University of Auckland
AUS	Association of University Staff
AVC	associate or assistant vice-chancellor
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CU	University of Canterbury
CUAP	Committee on University Academic Programmes
DVC	deputy vice-chancellor
EEdO	Equal Educational Opportunity
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFTS	Effective full-time student (numbers)
EMS	Extramural studies
EO	Equal Opportunity
HE	Higher education (no precise distinction is made between higher, tertiary and postsecondary education)
HEI	Higher education institution
HoD	Head of department
LU	Lincoln University
MU	Massey University
NZVCC	New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee
OU	University of Otago
PGSF	Public Good Science Fund
PVC	pro vice-chancellor
VC	vice-chancellor
VU	Victoria University of Wellington
WU	University of Waikato

1 The Institutional Context: Structure and Planning

1.1 Change

All universities are operating in a rapidly changing environment, and are making considerable changes to meet new situations. The AAU undertook pilot audits of the Universities of Auckland and Lincoln in 1994/95 to assist it in developing its processes. At the pilot audit of Lincoln University, the AAU tried the approach of auditing in terms of what was described in the portfolio, not the new structures subsequently introduced before the Audit Visit. This proved to be artificial, and in all subsequent audits, the AAU has investigated the university as it found it, even though this has frequently required a re-briefing of the audit panel about newly-stated plans or newly-introduced structures.

The task of the AAU is to evaluate the effectiveness of an institution's systems. In this period of rapid change, many systems were very new, with no outcomes by which to measure their effectiveness. In such cases, the AAU was only able to make provisional comments on the soundness and efficacy of the systems.

1.2 Vision/Mission

A central and common response to change is to revise or re-state the Vision or Mission of the institution. In several cases, these statements are not widely known, recognised or owned by staff. Generally, some staff oppose the new statements while other staff are keen to grasp the new possibilities that arise from them. Some opposition is to content of the statements (if they appear to be abandoning traditional and central features of a university), some is to business terminology, and some is to managerial methods. The support can be for the opportunity to pursue new directions and methods, but it can also be in anticipation of benefiting from new or re-directed resources. Audit panels noted that the support could quickly evaporate if these hopes were not realised. (See the comment below on 'resources'.)

The VUW Mission and Goals lists ‘attributes our graduates should possess as a result of their progress through the institution’. The use of such explicit statements is now more widespread. Subsequent to the AAU's audit of CUAP, universities are now required by CUAP to set out an explicit 'graduate profile' in relation to each proposed new programme. Some expected attributes of graduates are domain specific, some are generic within domains, and some relate to the student’s broader university experience. Individual departments are accustomed to addressing the first type of attribute, and the process is subject to the normal quality mechanisms. The second type has not been given so much attention, and departments may need external assistance (eg from faculty-level curriculum committees or staff development advisers) with it. To succeed with the third type, institutions will usually need to set up linking mechanisms outside and between departments.

1.3 Nature & Extent of Planning

When the new mission statements are adopted, the next step is planning how to achieve them. 'Strategic plans', 'business plans', etc. are much spoken of. Different approaches have been used (including principally top-down, principally bottom-up, environmentally-driven, and advance planning of the planning process) with variable success. Where effective planning was absent, other mechanisms are used, such as departmental reviews or simply filtering the visions of individuals.

AAU comments on plans include:

- "there is a fear of imposing a plan that may not be the right one"
- "the draft Plan fell short of [the] Charter commitments"
- "[despite] ground rules for [the] strategic planning process ... planning was still fragmented and incomplete"
- "any faculty, department (or individual) is free to select what it wishes from [the mission] for implementation"
- "there is no mechanism in place for aligning departmental plans with each other or with faculty or institutional plans"
- "there is an inadequate link between procedures enunciated or in place at institutional level and their implementation and monitoring at departmental level"
- "departments should be provided with a template for planning"

1.4 Organisational Structures

To implement the new missions and plans, most universities have devised new structures. The most common changes have been to reduce the number of faculties and to devolve more responsibilities to faculties. Until recently, a university's senior management group was typically composed mainly of the heads of faculties. Increasing system-wide attention to various functions (such as research, internationalisation, resources) has led to the creation of senior positions with corresponding responsibilities, and a consequent increase in the size of the senior group. One reason for reducing the number of faculties, therefore, is to reduce the size of the senior management group, while still permitting all faculties to be represented on it. A second reason is to reduce costs (in time and resources) by reducing the number of faculty support offices; and a third reason is to increase the size of each faculty, hence increasing their viability for devolution and (it is hoped) encouraging inter-disciplinary work within them.

In MU, the two-dimensional matrix of faculties and functions is augmented by a third dimension, namely campuses. Geographical separation allows more opportunity for undesired variability to occur, so, as the AAU observed, "with multiple campuses, the monitoring of quality processes is even more important than with a single campus". It also noted that where different campuses are in locations with different characteristics, there is "a tension between being part of a single institution, and responding appropriately to local needs and pressures". As more institutional mergers occur, these considerations will become more widespread.

Re-organisation of the senior management group was another common theme. Changes in the environment make significant changes in the scope and style of the management of universities inevitable. However, the character of a university depends in part on individual academics having a significant measure of freedom and expressing it through what has been called collegiality. Different universities have different approaches to achieving a balance between the managerial and collegial imperatives.

CU was attempting to solve the collegial/managerial tension by ensuring that senior management staff maintained their academic activities so as not to lose touch with academic realities. The AAU did not criticise this approach, but noted that it "does not reduce the total amount of work to be done, but simply shares it among more people. This can bring its own problems of fragmentation, overload, and oversights." In one university, the AAU observed that "the complexity of the management structure impedes implementation" of planned activities.

Committees

In several universities, the AAU commented on the number of committees and the use made of them. It noted instances where: the academic board or senate was too large to be useful; there was multiple handling by several committees; and committees were dealing with matters that should be the responsibility of a designated person. The AAU recommended, for example, "determining the extent to which each committee adds value", re-focusing those that do, and disbanding those that do not. Several universities had already embarked on such a process in advance of the academic audit.

Distributed structures

Some universities have a minimal authority at the centre, and others have devolved authority in the recent organisational re-structurings. Motives for devolution include putting decision-making closer to the action, and reducing central costs. The AAU has noted cases where the devolution appears to have actually increased costs as a result of the replication of activities (such as committees, administration, databases and courses) in each faculty. On the other hand, many departments and faculties are using the opportunities provided by devolution to focus and enhance their academic activities, and forge external links. (See also comments on 'variability' in Chapter 2.)

The changing balance between central and distributed authority, and external alliances of different strengths, create tensions that must be managed creatively.

Interdisciplinary co-operation

While the creation of larger academic structures extends the spread of disciplines across which interdisciplinary co-operation is facilitated, the boundaries between the structures can become much less permeable. Devolution can thus lead to a diminution in co-operation between different faculties and the academics therein. At one university, an internal task force commented in a report provided to the AAU that "academic staff wishing to take interdisciplinary initiatives have found that the structures pose barriers to the establishment

of such programmes". Elsewhere the AAU noted a "lack of co-ordination in some external activities" and undue inter-faculty competition for students. Therefore, if inter-faculty co-operation and/or co-ordination is seen as desirable, explicit mechanisms for its encouragement need to be put in place. One university had already recognised the need to train staff for devolution.

Organisations take several years to settle down after a re-structuring, and the academic audits were generally early in the re-structuring process. The AAU's judgement on whether the intended advantages had been achieved, and possible pitfalls avoided, was usually provisional.

1.5 Resources

Resources must be allocated to implement the plans and achieve the mission. Planning, structures and resource allocation are not always well-co-ordinated. Allocating resources according to a Strategic Plan requires an awareness of the nature and location of strengths and weaknesses, and a willingness to transfer resources where indicated by the monitoring system. One university retained a formulaic approach to funding, rather than tying it to the plan. Another university was advised to integrate "the Council’s financial emphasis and its academic emphasis". As noted in one case, the absence of a global resource allocation mechanism, combined with high departmental autonomy, can reduce an institution's ability to react. At OU, however, the AAU noted that "the corresponding resources [are] made available for new initiatives and ideas and to support the strategies mentioned above".

All universities are "having to plan in a context of static or declining financial resources, which makes for difficulties in implementing new initiatives, and an emphasis on those that cost least". It is worth noting, as New Zealand is concerned for the international reputation and comparability of its education, that for example UA has 90% as many EFTS as the University of Sydney, but only 65% of the budget and staff.

1.6 Information flow

In a time of change, information flow is particularly important. Staff need information about how to implement changes and plans, and about the desired results. In the absence of information, staff wonder what is happening, and fear the worst. In two cases, the AAU found that "constructive communication from staff to management is hindered by the fragmented management structure", but more often the lack of information flow is due rather to a general assumption that the information is already widely known.

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At LU, the AAU made positive comment about "the VC’s level and style of communication, his willingness to receive email directly rather than through hierarchical channels, and his responsiveness. Greater use of email communication between staff at all levels has been encouraged. The extensive consultation and communication have contributed to the relatively smooth transition to the new system so far."

The AAU took particular note of the role of the university Councils, and encouraged the briefing or induction of new Council members (of particular value to student appointees, who tend to change more frequently); and periodic review of the Council's performance. In

one case, the Council appeared somewhat unclear on the achievement or otherwise of the university's mission, and periodic focused updates were recommended. The AAU noted that "MU Council members are accessible to staff, and there is a regular informal meeting between Council and the AUS".

At LU, "there is a quarterly review with the VC of progress in terms of the business plan, and one Council meeting each year is set aside for self-reflection. A review of the Council's activities in 1994 resulted in the deletion of the Executive Committee and withdrawal from the previous heavy involvement in management aspects of the Corporate Plan. Council now has several task forces, that undertake activities as and when needed, without set terms of reference. The task forces include people with expertise specific to the task, and this system appears to be working well."

1.7 Critic and Conscience of Society

Most universities were able to point to significant staff involvement in media comment, public conferences, Treaty claims, national task forces, submissions to government enquiries, etc. and to the establishment of relevant structures (institutes, research centres, etc.). "CU staff have a very good record of speaking, writing, and making formal submissions that are critical of government policy." UW "refers to this role in its Strategic Plan, and it commits itself to further develop its policies for the expectations and processes relevant to this role."

At CU, "the VC is clear that professional freedom to speak is the prime consideration, and CU has rejected several grants because they carried unacceptable terms." At UW, "individual staff feel supported in their ability to make fair critical comment"; and "staff believe they are supported by MU, and have no sense of censorship". The UA Council expressed "support for any staff members who spoke or published in their field of expertise". The VUW "Council expressed support for staff who come under pressure from powerful interests as a result of speaking critically". "The Council of LU strongly supports this role ... provided it derives from [the staff member's] area of expertise, and preferably is supported by some form of peer review". However, it appears that there are rarely protocols to ensure such protection, and in some cases the AAU recommended that the university's support be re-affirmed and demonstrated. The reference to area of expertise should also be noted. Throughout the system, the recognition of such a role in staff promotion criteria is also generally fairly weak.

Another expression of this role is in the content of courses. For example, at MU "Department of Philosophy courses address the ethical implications of professional practice".

Market forces were seen as potentially problematic: "the pressure on institutions to earn money means that some of the comment formerly provided free may now have to be sold. There will need to be increased care that comment is not restricted to only that which is consistent with the interests of key customers". "Total commitment to a market-driven model would be inimical to the critic and conscience aspect role." "Some external

constituents detect much less action of this nature than in earlier decades, and there is a feeling that overt criticism of sensitive political, social or economic issues is discouraged."

3 The Treaty of Waitangi

3.1 Charters and Goals

The universities' Charters have generally addressed the expectation that these statements 'take account of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi'. MU's Charter, for example, commits MU to giving ‘effect to the Treaty of Waitangi and the obligation thereby created in respect of programmes for Maori people’. VU commits itself to ‘partnership with the Maori People’, mentioning participation, Maori language and customs, research and the role of the marae.

VU's charter statement is taken up in the ‘Mission and Goals’ in relation to Maori and non-Maori staff and students, and to Maori knowledge, understanding and research. Goals expressed by WU include developing ‘forms of partnership between Maori and other New Zealand people that are embodied in the Treaty of Waitangi’, so that ‘Maori customs and values are expressed in the ordinary life of the University’ and ‘the educational needs of Maori people are appropriately catered for’.

The AU Charter is now underpinned by wider policies, but in general the extent to which the Charter statements have permeated goals, policies and structures is quite variable. In several universities the AAU noted that, despite much good will, the institution lacked generally understood norms, expectations for action or accountability mechanisms with respect to Treaty issues. As a result, positive practices are usually initiated ad hoc by individuals or groups. When this happens, the initiative is often well-supported by senior staff.

A university has a national and an international role, and this will inevitably lead to some tension between its responsibility to the local iwi, to Maoridom, to New Zealand and to the international community. Acknowledging and debating such tensions is a key social function of universities.

3.2 Kaunihera

Most universities have a council-level or senate-level body to provide leadership on Treaty issues. In several cases, the AAU was able to identify positive results from the climate engendered, and the actions taken, by these bodies. However, all universities have struggled with the right composition and location in the structure for these bodies that will do justice to both principles and practicalities. At one university, the body was too tightly locked into the 'standard' university structure, while another felt that advisory body status is not consistent with the equality of partnership implied by the Treaty. Another such body reports to Council through the Equal Opportunity Committee, which the AAU acknowledged was convenient, but could dilute the attention to Treaty matters. Another is very large, so as to be representative, but is consequently unwieldy.

At one university, a committee of Council was disbanded and replaced (just before the AAU audit) by a committee reporting to the VC. LU's solution is to have two bodies: a council with an internal, management role, advisory to the VC; and a Treaty Task Force of Council, with an external focus.

3.3 Policies and Structures

Universities were also at various stages in translating their Charter commitments in this area into effective policies and structures. A commitment to ‘ensuring ... effective Maori participation’ requires the training and recruitment of Maori administrators as well as the representation of Maori/Treaty interests at all levels of governance, including senior committees.

There are currently few Maori in senior executive positions. At VU, an external review recommended that two senior members of the external Maori community should be appointed to assist the Chancellor. At CU, it is expected that every major committee should have Maori representation, but the small number of Maori academic staff makes this expectation unrealisable. AU has appointed a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Maori), hence providing input at the highest level, and establishing an authority for action. Foreshadowed actions at AU included the establishment of a wananga and the convening of a runanga. The Wellington Clinical School of OU reported a close relationship with and support from the kaumatua, and the recent appointment of a Maori secretary of student affairs.

One university possessed a detailed Operational Plan, linking goals and strategies, and assigning responsibility for implementation. However, no target dates were set and few staff knew of the Plan. Elsewhere, the area suffered from the common problem that the institution had explicit 'expectations' of faculties or departments, but no incentives for or monitoring of their achievement. This is not to minimise the difficulty of establishing effective structures. At one university, the AAU remarked on the clearly enunciated vision, positive leadership and evident goodwill, but even so noted that the resulting structures do not always give the best support to Maori staff, ensure an environment that is congenial for Maori student, and provide for Maori processes of problem-solving and conflict resolution when desired.

Specific initiatives include: contact between Te Whanau a Tane-nui-a-rangi at AU with the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia; the 'cultural development' process begun in 1989 in MU's Department of Social Policy and Social Work, which has included attention to pedagogy, retention of Maori students, and appointing and supporting Maori staff; and various research findings, challenging existing procedures at AU that have resulted in University-wide changes.

3.4 Staff

Maori Staff

The most striking and universal feature in this area is the pressure on Maori staff. All academic staff have teaching, research and administrative responsibilities, plus external

community activities if they so choose. The same responsibilities exist for Maori staff, with additional features.

- the work for the community, including iwi responsibilities and work on Treaty claims, is inescapable
- within the institution, they are constantly asked to provide advice and comment 'from a Maori perspective' on all conceivable issues
- if the institution provides training courses for non-Maori staff, the Maori staff are expected to assist
- Maori students gravitate to them for pastoral support, so if an institution is having commendable success in increasing its Maori student population, and the increase in Maori staff lags, the pressure is increased
- many Maori staff lack support themselves as they are the sole Maori person in a department
- implementation of policy may rely on Maori staff and students to take initiatives, rather than being integrated into the operating structure
- there is pressure to do research that is immediately relevant to the advancement of Maori, and
- academic advice-seeking sometimes turns into pressure to justify the very existence of a 'Maori view'.

This pressure on Maori staff is even more skewed at some universities as they look solely to the Maori faculty or department for advice etc., neglecting the potential contribution of other Maori staff and undermining their position. Also, the student-staff ratio in the Maori faculty or department is usually above the university's average because of the difficulty of attracting and retaining good staff.

At various universities, the AAU has recommended: alleviating this extra load; increasing the available resources and structural support; adjusting workloads allocations (as noted in some MU departments); targeted staff development; giving full recognition to such activities in the context of performance review, promotion and other academic awards; and providing for support from outside the university.

There are several centres of excellence in AU that are built on the work of Maori staff, particularly noteworthy being the work in the School of Education and the Faculty of Science, and the establishment of the Department of Maori and Pacific Health. WU has a high proportion of Maori staff (10%), and has established a School of Maori and Pacific Development. MU has two targeted research awards per year for Maori staff. Also at MU, post-graduate Maori students with the potential to take up an academic career are assisted through a system of supernumerary lectureships. At VU, the Department of Education has an explicit commitment to the appointment of Maori staff, and clearly defines their roles, while the Faculty of Arts has a Maori research committee. OU responded quickly to the recommendations of a review of the Department of Maori Studies in 1995, including appointing a professor. OU has provided targeted support for curriculum design from the HE Development Centre, and plans initiatives to facilitate higher degree study for Maori Studies staff.

Non-Maori staff

At one university, the AAU commented that "there is great variation in attitudes towards bicultural matters among non-Maori staff". This comment probably has wider applicability, not least because many ‘non-Maori’ staff are not of New Zealand origin, and may therefore be less familiar with New Zealand cultural characteristics. This means that continuous attention should be given to building active assent to the institution's bicultural vision. The AAU commented at one university that "staff need active support to take any necessary actions, such as re-designing subjects, developing new materials, devising case studies, etc."; and that another "should consider the possibility of providing a Maori language immersion course as an option in staff development".

Several universities provide some support in this area already, although rarely at the level of detail implied by the preceding two quotations. At LU, there are two-day Treaty of Waitangi workshops for staff. There appear to be good levels of attendance where there is strong departmental leadership on Treaty issues. At OU, courses on Maori pronunciation have been run for senior managers. VU runs excellent marae courses (although few of those attending the course are academic staff). VU and OU have run seminars on Te Reo Maori. WU has stated its intention to implement staff training in Te Reo Maori and tikanga Maori.

3.5 Students

Maori students

Several universities can point to a significant increase in the number of Maori students in recent years, while noting that the proportion still lags behind that of Maori in the catchment area. AU has various access programmes and links that, while not specifically targeted at Maori, provide pathways into AU for Maori students; there is an orientation day for Maori students before enrolment; and some departments provide targeted support of various kinds. Throughout its history, WU has made a feature of making WU accessible to Maori students, and various schools have effective mechanisms for enhancing the attractiveness of the University for Maori students. At VU, Commerce has a positive entry programme for Maori.

Once the students are enrolled, support is needed. At one university, the AAU observed "while access is being addressed satisfactorily ... retention need[s] further attention". At LU, "the halls of residence provide good support for their Maori residents. LU has one Maori residential warden (out of a total of four) and three Maori residential assistants (out of a total of 14). Maori Liaison activities are incorporated into the Student Liaison Co-ordinator positions". MU is "making good progress on the number of graduations, and of students continuing to higher degrees. There are currently 12 Maori students studying towards a PhD." At OU, "Education has, and Zoology was appointing, a Pou Here Tangata to provide support for Maori students and advice on Maori perspectives and research, while the Law Department has good links with the Maori law students association". At AU, the University Students Association (AUSA) and the Maori Students Association (Nga

Tauira Maori) have an agreement on mutual recognition and cross membership of executive committees.

Where there is a Maori Liaison Officer, the principal role is with schools and prospective students, but when these students are admitted, the MLO is well known to them, so they may exert pressure for the MLO to be available to them as a resource person.

During the audit of AU, it was noted that having greater numbers of Maori students in courses often leads to a revision of the curriculum to incorporate Maori perspectives. Basic questions of the definition of the discipline can also be raised, together with an integration of Maori methods of discourse and enquiry. This can make it difficult to satisfy the needs of Maori and non-Maori students in the same group. At MU and OU, some departments conduct separate tutorials for Maori students, but it is necessary to be quite clear on the reason for this approach, and to set it in a broader structure that avoids separatism.

Informed support needs accurate and adequate data. At OU, incoming students are invited to specify their iwi affiliations, and assessment results for Maori students are being extracted from the student database. Elsewhere the AAU suggested that data on results in courses “should be assembled in a form that permits longitudinal comparisons, and comparisons with non-Maori students".

All the universities provide for students to take assignments and examinations in Te Reo Maori, under various conditions. This provision has not been extensively used, which may be through a lack of awareness of it. However, as noted in one audit report: "Only a small number of students have availed themselves of this possibility, but more seem reassured by its existence."

Non-Maori students

All the universities have work to do to improve their students' understanding of what it means to acknowledge ‘Maori customs and values’ in the educational life of the institution. At one university, the AAU reported that "accounts of students’ experience of Treaty issues or emphasis in courses ranges from very high to non-existent", and this comment would be more widely applicable. There is a common tendency to ‘ring-fence’ Maori issues, rather than treating them as integral to the operation of the institution. For example, at one university it was noted that "the planning of new subjects and programmes does not necessarily take account of Treaty issues and their place in the curriculum" and "there are no incentives to consider Maori perspectives in courses". This leaves the matter to heavily to the discretion of the lecturer.

The following specific activities were noted. At WU, several schools have courses with a bicultural emphasis, for Maori and Non-Maori. At WU, some courses are being offered in Te Reo Maori in disciplines where this is not common, such as computer science; and WU’s Maori language courses are highly regarded in the community. Six Maori language papers at MU are taught in Te Reo Maori, and 65% of students in the first-year course are non-Maori. At CU, The Faculty of Science has a Maori Science Students group, and some

departments or faculties have bicultural committees. At OU, there is a compulsory course on Cultural Studies in first-year Physiotherapy, and all History PhD students take a paper on Te Reo Maori.

The AAU found that some courses offered in Te Reo Maori are declining in popularity, apparently for the positive reason that more Maori students are enrolling for generally-available courses in preference to targeted ones, so they are able to operate successfully within both cultures. Te Reo Maori immersion degrees should therefore be examined carefully.

3.6 Other Matters

Community

WU students may opt to undertake induction or to graduate on the marae, and the latter is popular among both Maori and non-Maori students. MU has good links with iwi in many parts of the country, and Maori language and cultural programmes are being offered effectively in conjunction with Whitireia Polytechnic, Tai Rawhiti Polytechnic and the Eastern Institute of Technology. A MU representative maintains contact with Tai Tokerau whanau on marae throughout Northland. VU's Faculty of Law has hosted regional hui and commissioned a report on whether the Faculty meets Maori needs. During 1997, LU took a lead role in establishing Te Tapuae o Rehua, a partnership (between LU, Christchurch College of Education, Christchurch Polytechnic, and Ngai Tahu) for the provision of vocational and educational opportunities.

Signage

Some universities provide some bilingual signage on all campuses. This is a good step towards a congenial environment, and the AAU has encouraged more widespread attention to this.

4 Staff Matters

The chronological sequence of likely experiences of a staff member, from appointment, though induction, appraisal, promotion, etc., provides a natural sequence in which to comment on staff-related procedures.

4.1 New Staff

The most common observation is that staff experience of appointment, induction and mentoring, and sometimes of appraisal and development, varies considerably, despite the existence of institution-wide systems. This is because the implementation is left to faculties and departments with little supervision and with inadequate training of interviewers, appraisers, etc. On the other hand, there is extensive good practice within the system, and the need is for this to be consistently harnessed.

Appointment

Most short-listed academic candidates are interviewed, at least by telephone, and the AAU has commented that this should always be the case. In at least two universities, all short-listed academic candidates are brought to the campus. There is increasing attention to teaching experience and ability in the selection process. In two universities, the AAU commented that the appointment process would be improved by the provision in writing of a full set of expectations, including areas of work, expected teaching schedule and workload. Two universities see the appointment of top quality staff as being the principal quality assurance mechanism. The AAU observed that this must be followed by continuing and systematic support and development.

Induction

The AAU made positive comment on the induction procedures at LU and OU. At another university, the AAU "heard favourable reports on the effectiveness of ... courses in the induction of [academic] staff, although the courses are not compulsory, and attendance seems to be heavily dependent on the time of a new staff member's arrival, and early workload". This was fairly typical. Induction is usually compulsory for general staff, and at MU this was being extended to all staff. Orientation for new international staff needs particular attention, to ensure that firstly they understand relevant New Zealand characteristics, and secondly the cost of their appointment is not wasted,

Mentoring

Almost all universities have a policy on and procedures for mentoring, but staff experience of mentoring varies from excellent to unknown. At two universities, the AAU recommended that "the excellent current instances should therefore be identified and commended as good practice" across the university.

Probation

CU has taken the view that current employment law renders probationary appointments ineffective (and consequently has thorough-going appointment process). Practices

elsewhere are variable, but instances are reported of probationary staff not being confirmed (or resigning) because of failure to achieve the specified goals, including failure in teaching performance. The AAU found the WU probationary system to be "very thorough".

4.2 Staff Appraisal and Development

All universities have procedures in this area, but not all have an explicit policy, and in this case the procedures tend to be fragmented.

Academic staff

For academic staff, there is continuing tension between appraisal for development and appraisal for salary increase or other promotion. It appears that LU is successfully separating these two processes, while allowing staff the option to submit development appraisal evidence for consideration in the promotion process.

At two universities, it seemed that appraisal was triggered only by an application for promotion. However, this is an area of much current activity, and during the period of this report, AU, MU, OU and VU were all at different stages of the design and implementation of appraisal and development procedures. Where these procedures were already in operation, there were positive comments from both staff and appraisers. At both AU and MU. training for appraisers will be mandatory, and the AAU suggested that the effectiveness of this training be evaluated.

AU is aiming to set an international baseline for these reviews. Departments draw up discipline-specific performance criteria (‘expectation statements’), and have these reviewed by two comparable departments elsewhere, preferably overseas.

The use of colleague or peer evaluation is increasing as one factor in staff appraisal, and the AAU made several recommendations that appraisers should be given some training in such things as observation of teaching, etc. At VUW, appraisers are given written advice on what to consider in making their evaluations.

Appraisal must be linked into plans for further development and/or improvement. The desired steps must be specified, relevant development activities identified, and target achievements and dates agreed. This process needs close liaison between appraisers, HoDs (if different) and the university’s staff development unit. At present, there is little systematic liaison, and the link is generally seen in terms of remediation rather than continuing professional education (CPE).

Staff professionalism and commitment, together with the appraisal and development mechanisms in place, mean that most instances of unsatisfactory performance are dealt with, and universities could give examples of staff having been dismissed or re-located as a result of persistent unsatisfactory performance. Conversely, there are some instances of continuing poor performance (for example, staff members identified, year after year, as poor teachers). As support and development processes are improved, it is important for institutions to ensure that it is difficult for people to evade them.

General staff

At AU, the review scheme for general staff has been in place for several years. It appears to be working well, although it is dependent on the commitment of the reviewer. Training is provided for new staff and new reviewers. Elsewhere, the picture is rather mixed, with devolution having contributed to variability of treatment of staff. At LU, MU and OU, major projects had been undertaken on job evaluation, critical competencies, or mapping, and these should improve consistency. At WU, grants are provided for technical staff to attend external courses to upgrade their skills.

4.3 Continuing Professional Education (CPE)

Universities have generally been slow to follow the lead of other organisations in recognising the need for continuing professional education (CPE) for their staff. Whatever the historical reasons for this, and regardless of their validity, the context has changed. There is a greater range of professional demands on ordinary academic staff, and a requirement that deans and heads of department ('middle management') be managers and leaders as well as academic colleagues. The AAU made several recommendations in this vein. AU has stated the general principle that all staff must be trained for any new roles they take up.

Staff development units (SDUs)

These are the locus for the professional development that occurs in the universities. They have largely (but not entirely) overcome the misapprehension that they are relevant only to those staff who need remediation. The AAU found that they are all effective (in some cases very effective) and well-regarded, usually with minimal staff. They provide a mixture of individual assistance (on request from the individual or the HoD), courses on request, and courses at the SDU's initiative. They are usually also responsible for administering course and staff evaluations to students.

SDUs have other specific responsibilities in different institutions. For example, at WU the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU) provides support to students as well as staff. At VU, the University Teaching Development Centre (UTDC) carries out extensive Training Needs Analyses, for example of the role of the chairperson, the academic mentor or the thesis supervisor. These analyses are well-executed, factual, well-structured and well-written. At LU, the Director of the Education Centre (EC) discusses each staff member’s teaching evaluations with him or her, as evaluations have best effect if they are discussed with someone able to offer advice on interpretation and remediation. At OU, the Higher Education Development Centre (HEDC) has now taken on a policy role.

A major limit to the SDUs' effectiveness is that they tend to work in isolation, when they should be an integral (although not the sole) part of the university's CPE programme. So, for example, a poorly-performing staff member may be advised but not required to obtain assistance from the SDU; attendance at a SDU-initiated course may be poor because the SDU has identified a future need before its relevance is apparent to the clientele; patterns

in student evaluations may become apparent to the SDU, but without the SDU having the ability to act on this recognition; etc.

CPE policy

The first requirement in addressing this is the establishment of an institutional CPE policy, covering all staff, within which the SDU is a major agent (along with, of course, HoDs, etc.) So, for example, information from staff appraisals and course evaluations, and the SDU's own identification of topics or skills of future need, would be fed into the SDU's planning with some certainty that the programmes offered with be used. As the AAU commented at one university, the CPE function must be adequately resourced.

Consistent with an institutional staff development policy is the integration of the academic and general staff development functions. Where they are separate, each with its own constituency, duplication of activities occurs (or participants ignore the artificial boundary). At AU, the two offices merged in 1996 (into the Centre for Professional Development, CPD) and are working well in this form. Where the functions are separate, they often have separate reporting lines (eg to a PVC (Academic) and to the Human Resources Manager). When they are combined the single reporting lie must be such as to maximise the SDU's acceptance and effectiveness.

Networks

At OU, HEDC *fellows* are seconded to the HEDC from a division to work on educational development projects, usually related to their division; HEDC *associates* are HEDC contact people within departments. Similarly, CU's Educational Research and Advisory Unit (ERAU) has a contact network of one person per department, and uses other people from inside and outside CU to assist in specific activities and services. LU has a teaching enhancement secondment scheme that provides money to a department to enable it to second a staff member to the EC, so that the staff member can undertake teaching development work.

At one university, the AAU recommended the employment of at least one SDU staff member "**who can support Maori-based training courses for staff and learning assistance for students"**. At another university, the AAU noted that feedback on the SDU's activities was mainly from surveys, and that some issues might better be brought to light by the occasional use of focus groups.

4.4 Promotion

Procedures

The major feature of promotion procedures detected by the AAU was the lack of accurate information about them on the part of many staff. Frequently, the AAU found that procedures were fair, and as advertised, but that misapprehensions abounded. It therefore urged several institutions to pay particular attention to communication channels and the

timely provision of accurate information. At VU, the staff development unit runs discussions for promotion applicants, which appeared to be helpful.

In most universities, there are faculty committees, so the initial consideration of applications takes place in a context where the significance of the applicant's work is most readily understood. Institutional consistency is achieved via a central committee. In some universities, this consistency is aided by having members from other faculties on the faculty committees. In a devolved environment, each faculty is able to tailor its promotion criteria (cf the comment above on AU's 'expectation statements'). The AAU has commented on the danger that the differences may be seen by staff to be unfair inconsistencies rather than appropriate emphases.

At VU, representatives of AUS, EEO and the Association of Victoria University Women are present as observers at promotion discussions. They write reports on the process and action has been taken on their recommendations. At OU, the VC invites the AUS to advise HoDs before each promotion round on any new factors and their implications, and AUS and EEO observers are present at promotion meetings.

As universities revise their plans and reposition themselves in various ways, they should ensure there is congruence between promotion policies at all levels and any revised emphases.

The AAU commented that the use of standard promotion application forms may disadvantage those who do not fit the standard template.

At one university the AAU made the following comment, which may have wider applicability: "Several procedures (such as appointment, continuation, research grant applications, leave applications, promotions) operate independently, although all are related to an assessment of the staff member's past or likely performance. Inconsistency should be avoided as much as possible."

Criteria

Most of the misconceptions referred to above related to the criteria for promotion, including the clarity of the criteria; what constitutes adequate evidence; the relative weight placed on teaching, research, administration and community service; recognition of professional practice; the value of teaching qualifications; the account taken of oral work; the relation between faculty and central decisions; and whether there are quotas.

In most institutions, academic applicants for promotion must provide evidence of teaching quality from recent student evaluations, but there is a welcome move away from using these as the sole indicators of teaching performance and the inclusion of colleague evaluations, for example, in addition. Some institutions are moving to use a portfolio as a way of co-ordinating and strengthening the various indicators. The AAU commended this move, while noting that it should be a comprehensive portfolio, covering all the promotion criteria, not merely to teaching.

At one university, to substantiate the statements about the weight placed on teaching performance, the AAU was informed of a readership application that failed, despite good research performance, on the grounds of poor teaching performance. At another university, the converse is signalled by the step to reader being phrased firmly in terms of research.

Whether there are quotas on successful applications proved to be an issue at several institutions, but not at OU, which has developed a criterion-referenced approach to promotion decisions. This is a move away from norm-referencing, so promotion is clearly and solely on merit. Otherwise, the AAU recommended that, when the institution invites applications for promotion, it should state explicitly whether resources are restricted so quotas may be applied in that year, and if so to which grades. Similarly, if quotas will not be applied, that should be stated (and adhered to).

Feedback and appeals

The poor quality of feedback to applicants on promotion decisions was a concern in almost every university. The AAU commented on "blandness of the feedback without indication of the reasons for failure or what was good in the application", and failure to indicate "what steps might lead to success in a future application". In several cases, the AAU recommended along the following lines: "Written feedback should be provided to applicants for promotion. Where the application has been unsuccessful, the reasons for failure should be given, together with indication of strengths, and guidance on areas to be addressed in future." OU had already addressed this matter, and the AAU found that comprehensive feedback is given in writing.

Public notification of successful applications is the usual practice, although one university expressed concern about the implications of the Privacy Act.

Appeals procedures exist at all institutions, but the AAU made various recommendations for their improvement, in terms of formality, grounds, appeal body etc. At one university, the AAU commented that "the number of successful appeals gives cause for concern about the promotions process. It also suggests that the criteria for the appeals may be different from the main promotion round, and it raises questions about how equality is maintained." (In most universities, appeals are restricted essentially to cases where due process has not been followed.)

4.5 Middle Management: Heads of Department (HoDs) and Deans

As mentioned above, the expectations placed on HoDs and deans are changing significantly, and the support structure must change to match. Part of the problem is that many staff take on the role from a sense of obligation and are uncommitted and uncomfortable in the position. They may try to add the managerial activity to a full load of research and teaching, whether because the latter is their principal interest, or because the career rewards for those activities are more securely embedded in the system. As a result, the institution may gain cheap but inefficient managers, at the expense of a loss of quality or quantity of academic work. Even when the total load is not greater than would be expected of middle managers elsewhere, there is an extra complication arising from the

conflict between the institution's expectations of the HoD to be a line manager and the department's expectations of collegiality.

The requirements of the new support structures are well-expressed in a report on the role of the HoD that had been produced by AU just before the academic audit. The AAU commented that it supported the thrust of most of the recommendations, including "the provision to all HoDs of a statement of the role and expectations of HoDs that is both generic and specific, includes guidance on management style, and emphasises projects and key accomplishments; preparatory training, a comprehensive induction programme and continuing management skills training for all HoDs; [regular performance reviews of HoDs;] provision for all staff to have input into the performance review of their HoD; appropriate research and administrative and financial reward; encouragement of networking between and mentoring for HoDs; attention to the amount and nature of the informational demands placed on HoDs". Similar observations were made at other universities.

At the time of its audit, OU had already embarked on a large-scale, comprehensive. three-year programme of staff development is under way for HoDs and senior managers. HoDs were very positive about receiving the training necessary to be able to manage in the new environment. At MU, most HoDs are appointed after international advertisement to permanent professorial positions, with a five-year probationary period. On appointment, they are provided with a Statement of Accountability for their position, produced by the respective dean or PVC.

OU has a good process of reviews of professors and HoDs. A valuable feature of the evaluation of HoDs is the use of a questionnaire to their staff. Evaluation of deans and HoDs occurs in other universities, also, but the AAU made several recommendations for the process to be more regular, comprehensive and supportive.

4.6 Equity

All the universities are paying increasing attention to issues of equity. At AU, for example, a PVC(Equal Opportunity) had been appointed shortly before the academic audit. This was followed by an external review of EEO. Recommendations in the report are oriented towards ensuring that aspects of EO become an integral part of AU's activities, including "the development of PIs, systematic reporting, planning guidelines, recruitment and promotion guidelines, job descriptions, provision of training, and drawing on AU staff in the various ethnic groups". At several institutions, the AAU made recommendations aimed at strengthening the efforts towards equity of opportunity.

OU is running an effective programme called 'Women in Leadership', open to both academic and general staff, and providing staff with the necessary management, leadership and communication skills.

At MU, the Status of University Women Advisory Committee (SUWAC) is a subcommittee of the EO Committee. Positive results of SUWAC's work include the introduction of research grants for women. Since 1990, 28 women have benefited from research grants, freeing them from teaching to complete research or higher degree work. Also, women may

be offered a supernumerary lectureship at the conclusion of their three-year assistant lectureship. This enables them to continue in the position for up to three more years, awaiting the opportunity to apply for an established lectureship.

At AU, the percentage of professors and associate professors who are female has doubled from 1986 to 1996 (although the proportions are still less than 10%). Women applicants now appear to be promoted at about the same rate as men, but the number of applicants is far less. AU is planning explicit action to foster career development of applicants from under-represented groups. At CU, the AAU noted that 65% of appointments in the year preceding the audit were of women, including the last five appointments (although this increased the number of female academics by only one percentage point). Also in 1996, two women professors and a woman dean were appointed.

A world-wide equity issue is the increasing employment of staff on short-term contracts. In its audit portfolio, LU pointed out that it had increased the "use of short-term, part-time and other non-traditional academic appointments", and the AAU investigated the effect of this situation on students and both the full-time and the ‘non-traditional staff’. It concluded that the situation was being managed satisfactorily, and that "the short-term staff receive similar career considerations as full-time staff".

(Aspects of Equal Educational Opportunity (EEdO), which is the other arm of EO, are mentioned in Section 11.)

5 Courses and Programmes

5.1 Extramural Aspects of Programme Approval

Of the major academic areas audited by the AAU, this is the one in which the universities are subject to the greatest direct external scrutiny. Although the Charter and Statement of Objectives must be approved by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry uses some general guidelines rather than explicit criteria. New and revised courses and programmes, on the other hand, are subject to approval by the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) according to specific criteria. Furthermore, these criteria were not devised by the universities alone, but were drawn up in agreement with the NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA) (and published in the government Gazette).

The five criteria are:
1. The acceptability of the proposed course to the relevant academic, industrial, professional and other communities, in terms of the stated objectives, nomenclature, content and structure.
2. The adequacy and appropriateness of the regulations which specify requirements for admission, recognition of prior learning, credit for previous study, course structure, assessment procedures, and the normal progression.
3. The availability of appropriate academic staffing, teaching and research facilities, and support services.
4. The adequacy of the means of ensuring that assessment procedures are both appropriate, given the stated objectives, and fair.
5. The adequacy of the provisions for monitoring course quality, reviewing course regulations and content, and determining whether courses shall continue to be offered.

All universities therefore have systems for designing programmes that address these five criteria. Furthermore, when programmes are submitted to CUAP for consideration, CUAP circulates the proposals to the other universities for comment. All universities therefore have systems for considering programme proposals from other institutions.

CUAP

Since the totality of each university's programme approval and monitoring procedures comprises both its own internal procedures and CUAP's procedures, the AAU is required to audit CUAP's procedures as well as those of each university.

5.2 Intramural Aspects of Programme Approval

Structures

All universities must consider the academic and resource aspects of a proposed new programme. This is usually done by two different committees, and their deliberations are linked in various ways. Some universities pass the proposal through the resources committee to the academic committee; some do the converse; some send it to both

simultaneously; and at least one sends an outline proposal to the resources committee for 'in principle' approval before developing a detailed proposal (which then goes to both committees). At one university, the processes diverged after initial approvals, so resources did not necessarily follow the programme. One university requires proposals to be part of a broader business plan.

Matters considered at various universities include

- consistency with the university's mission; policy; strategic plan Teaching & Learning Plan; Teaching & Research Plan
- consistency with faculty priorities
- academic merit of the proposal
- strategic implications, including the existence of a market
- stakeholder input
- resource implications, including the effect on the department's other activities
- efficiency
- the principles of good curriculum design, including content and organisation
- staffing
- student workload
- monitoring
- co-ordination
- timetabling
- regulations
- flaws or gaps in the documentation

The universities attempt to balance conflicting requirements, so the process integrates stakeholder input with the characteristics of a university as a place of higher learning. One or two systems were sufficiently fragmented that the AAU was not convinced that questions such as ‘is this a good academic initiative?’ were addressed in a holistic way. At MU and VU, the AAU found the central committees to be thorough and effective, noting that the Academic Committee at VU takes the initiative to seek input from other sources where the proposal has evident shortcomings.

Improvements

Despite the extent of these intramural programme design systems, the AAU identified some defects in their operation in most universities. The most common defect was a failure to ensure that library and other specific resources would be committed to a proposed programme; other defects noted at various universities were in the extent of consultation with relevant communities, lack of consideration of Treaty of Waitangi aspects, and the lack of structured input from students. However, the defects in the programme approval process are offset by the great deal of time and attention brought to it by thoughtful people in the discipline concerned. As reported in the AAU’s report of the audit of CUAP, the extramural process is also somewhat clumsy and occasionally excessive, but the net result of this activity is that the total programme approval process is secure. Similarly, if any defects persist through to the time of programme presentation, the academic staff ensure that they are dealt with at that stage.

All universities have internal handbooks setting down the scope of considerations and the procedures that should be followed by individuals, departments, faculties and committees in the process of programme design and approval. Sometimes the defects noted above occur because the procedures are not carried out thoroughly, and sometimes because the same issues are flagged for checking by several bodies, and each then assumes the other has done it. In one university the AAU suggested that the central committee should, for a sample of programme proposals, check in some detail that all the steps had been carried out thoroughly and completely at department and faculty level.

One university's self-audit had revealed that, on occasion, proposals had been referred back to faculties up to eight times. This led the AAU to suggest that the central committees or staff should give more support and advice to departmental staff unfamiliar with the programme creation process. In another university, the AAU suggested that initial checking could be carried out by a senior administrator to save time of the academic committee.

Student contributions

As already noted, the extent and nature of input from students to the initiation and design of programmes is very variable.

At AU, some departments report significant input for course introduction or amendment from the staff/student consultative committee. At another university, this was stated to be the intended mechanism, but the AAU found many proposals to be very inchoate at that early stage, and too fixed at the next opportunity for student input. At another university, the AAU commented that "there is no requirement for departments to consult with students", but that in practice student input was often sought. At CU, many departments send the proposal to the Education Co-ordinator of the CU Students' Association, which is a helpful step.

Co-ordination and interdisciplinary programmes

A department may propose a course that duplicates one already available elsewhere in the university, or one that others may think belongs properly within another department. This may be done through ignorance or through a desire to get or keep the EFTS. The probability of this occurring is greater in a more devolved structure. The AAU did not determine that this was a widespread problem, but recommended that one academic committee pay greater attention to aspects of co-ordination. It noted that at VU and OU the academic committees ask for statements from two departments when there appear to be similarities or overlaps with other areas, or the potential for disputed ownership. At VU, if it is recognised that a cross-disciplinary proposal is emerging, an ad hoc advisory group may be set up, with the proposal going through both faculty boards. MU has an excellent system of programme development for extramural programmes, which are tied in with many on-campus papers.

At CU, all the interdisciplinary courses are administered by a single Board, but this can leave them outside the departmental structure. At another university the AAU noted occasional fragmentation of the student experience in interdisciplinary courses, and such

courses need continuing co-ordination. Particularly with the moves to semesterisation and modularisation, increasing attention to congruence of load and credit is essential.

Fast-tracking

As institutions are exhorted to be more responsive to their various markets, there is increasing interest in the ability to take some programmes through the approval steps very quickly. Some universities have developed (intramural) systems for doing this, and CUAP can also offer a faster-than-normal service when needed.

Resources

In two universities, the AAU noted that funding for new initiatives is received only after the initiative is operating, which strains the faculty or department budget. This was addressed elsewhere by a closer linking of initiatives, planning and resources.

5.3 Programme Monitoring

Once a programme is in operation, there is inadequate attention to systematic monitoring to ensure that the it is achieving the objectives set out when it was approved. However, following the audit of CUAP, and the AAU's comment that CUAP's monitoring role was not being adequately exercised, CUAP moved to introduce a requirement for institutions to report to CUAP on graduation of the first cohort of students from a new course. By the end of the audit cycle, this requirement was beginning to affect the universities' procedures. AU, for example, is planning to evaluate programmes at the end of the first cohort. If the Education Committee agrees that the evaluation is satisfactory, subsequent evaluation and quality assurance will take place under ‘the regular cycle of departmental and programme reviews’. VU preceded the CUAP requirement, and since 1995 has required a report on completion of new programmes by the first cohort of students. The VU Students' Association is invited to comment on student reaction to the programme.

While accepting that it is difficult to determine whether a programme has achieved its objectives before at least some students have completed it, the AAU believes that multi-year programmes should be evaluated annually, and that the monitoring at the end of the first full year of operation of a course be rather fuller than the routine annual monitoring.

CU requires courses be reviewed each year, with varying opinions on the value of such frequency. Sampling could be an economical approach to annual monitoring, and this has been used at least AU and WU. The AAU recommended that this be done systematically, to avoid gaps in the process. At VU, all courses and papers undergo student evaluations at least every three years. These reports have now been extended to include more general comment on objectives, delivery and enhancement.

Course deletions

In several universities, the process for discontinuing or deleting courses is rather ad hoc, and unrelated to the wider plan. As the AAU recommended to one university, "the criteria

for approval of new courses should also apply to the retention or deletion of courses". In various places, positive action is taken to delete courses with low enrolments; a programme that replaces an existing one is looked on favourably by academic committee; and new course proposals must be accompanied by deletion proposals. For some years, LU has encouraged students to (provisionally) plan their whole three-year course at the start, but this helpful approach then reduces flexibility for the institution.

6 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

6.1 Teaching Plans

Several universities are working on the larger context for teaching. WU, for example, established a working group to examine options and strategies for developing more flexible teaching styles. OU took a very comprehensive approach with the development of a Teaching and Learning Plan as the interpretation and elaboration of the teaching, learning and assessment implications of the OU Plan. It identifies four dimensions of quality learning, namely disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and attitudes; understanding; ethical and social implications of knowledge; and lifelong learning. It is a template for course development, teaching methods and assessment strategies, and includes goals for related support activities. Each department has a Teaching and Research Plan that gives expression to its strategic objectives, and is consistent with OU's Teaching and Learning and Research Management Plans.

6.2 Evaluation of Courses and Teaching

Evaluation systems

All universities have well-developed systems of evaluation of courses and teaching, usually managed by the staff development unit, and based on input from students. In a very short period of time, use of such student questionnaires has become almost universal, and in several institutions they are required as an accompaniment to any application for promotion. This very wide use means that institutions are having to grapple with a variety of problems, including

- overload of students with questionnaires;
- whether students can be expected to contribute to surveys whose purpose is to support a staff member's application for promotion;
- how to answer those questions about courses and teaching with which students cannot assist;
- the need for variety in the evaluation process;
- how to provide flexibility to cope with diverse teaching types and disciplines;
- how properly to interpret the measures;
- how to obtain feedback in time for it to affect the course;
- how to provide feedback to students, and reassure them that their input has been effective;
- attention to the improvement of teaching and learning.

AU documented the shift in emphasis of student evaluation of teaching, over about twenty years, from gaining selective information for improvement of the individual academic's performance, to a summative process (Student Evaluation of Courses And Teaching, SECAT) for institutional purposes. In 1997, therefore, AU reviewed the evaluation process, and is implementing a comprehensive system with multiple components, namely Fast Feedback Questionnaires, the Learning Improvement Strategies Questionnaire, the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality Questionnaire, and the Course Experience Questionnaire for information gathering, and the staff Teaching Portfolio for evidence of teaching activity and effectiveness.

VU also offers variety with four kinds of evaluation based on student feedback to teachers, namely a personal evaluation of teaching; targeted evaluation; facilitated class discussion; and end-of course evaluations. OU provides for a student summative evaluation of six items, for use in confirmation and promotion; a customised student evaluation for diagnostic feedback for evaluating the paper or the teacher; and a peer evaluation questionnaire for comments on a colleague's teaching. LU has included teaching in a broader survey of student satisfaction with various aspects of the University. At MU, each paper must be subject to a SECAT (Student Evaluation of Content, Administration & Teaching) review at least triennially, and in addition MU Students' Association can ask a HoD to instigate one.

In some cases, to provide for flexibility and customisation, staff can select and/or provide questions for inclusion in a survey form. The AAU has pointed out that this must be done carefully, or it is open to suspicion of manipulation to obtain a more favourable result. Alternatively, only the standard questions should be included in any comparisons between staff or in assessments for promotion.

Feedback to students

In several audit reports, the AAU commented that "in general, students receive little feedback on the results of the teaching evaluations". This is partly because they are most commonly used at the end of semester, and the students are not available as a group to receive the feedback. The AAU advised the increased use of formative evaluations well before the end of the semester, and informing students about previous evaluations and what changes have resulted.

Colleague and other evaluations of teaching

There are questions about teaching that students cannot answer. These include discipline-related ones such as whether material presented is accurate, relevant, comprehensive and useful; and one's requiring wider experience, such as how the lecturer or tutor might compare with those elsewhere. Therefore, other evaluation methods must be used in addition to student surveys. The most obvious source for answers to questions that students cannot answer is other academic staff. The AAU has advised increasing the use of colleague evaluation of teaching, while pointing out that colleague evaluators need training for the task. Several universities offer other mechanisms also, such as facilitated class discussions, but these methods tend to be very labour intensive.

One of the AU task forces set up to explore the implications of the expanded Mission statement considered teaching and learning. It made some significant recommendations, such as HoDs being required to observe their staff's teaching, checking of applicants' teaching ability, a requirement for teacher training, and the need to revise the process for student evaluation of teaching (as mentioned above).

Effects of evaluations

At one university, the AAU commented that "students observe some poor lecturing that continues unchanged, year after year, even after specific comments, so the implicit feedback is that the evaluations have no effect", and this comment would be valid elsewhere also. All institutions have some mechanisms for picking up staff whose evaluations are poor, and referring them to the staff development unit for coaching and advice. Not all monitor this process to ensure that a satisfactory conclusion is reached. In any case, "it takes time to achieve significant improvements to teaching performance", and so "the effects of any action are likely to be evident only in the longer term (compared to the typical three-year course of any student)".

In more extreme cases, telling action occurs. The AAU noted in one report that "if chronic poor performance occurs, the [human resources area] becomes involved also, and termination of employment may ensue".

6.3 Grants, Awards, Training & Dissemination of Good Practice

Recognition of and incentives for teaching

For some time, the reward structures of the universities have been oriented towards research. Recognition of teaching started to occur through the introduction of teaching awards. For a while, there were parallel recognition processes, with promotion for research and awards for teaching. This is changing, and the recognition of teaching (and other factors) in promotion is described in Chapter 4. Conversely, some institutions now make special awards for outstanding research as well as outstanding teaching. WU also makes Merit Awards to general staff for contributions which are ‘significant and of excellent quality’.

Several universities offer annual awards for outstanding teachers. Nominations are sought in various ways, and from various constituencies (eg one per faculty), and the selection is the responsibility of a variety of committees. These awards have generally achieved a high level of recognition and prestige.

Grants

While the awards recognise achievements already accomplished, several universities offer grants (analogous to research grants) towards the development of some teaching process, artefact or competency. At MU, $180,000 is allocated annually to the competitive Fund for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching. The grants also recognise staff’s excellence or potential in teaching. AU has Teaching Improvement Grants, although only $30,000 was available for 15 grants in 1997. Criteria for OU's Teaching and Learning Development Grants include requirements to: relate to previous research and to priority areas in OU’s Teaching and Learning Plan; and embody processes for project evaluation and dissemination.

Dissemination

Dissemination of information about teaching awards and the products of teaching grants assists in raising the profile of teaching throughout the institution, motivates staff, and permits the sharing of the good practices identified or products developed. At AU, projects supported by Teaching Improvement Grants are described in an annual publication ‘Innovations in Learning’. Another publication ‘Talking About Teaching’, contains reports of interviews with recipients of Distinguished Teaching Awards, and a short leaflet is available that contains brief insights from awardees. In several universities, the staff development unit notes who has received awards (or good student evaluations) and invites them to give seminars on their teaching methods, etc. They may also be asked to act as mentors.

Training

The need for more formal preparation for the academic task of teaching is being increasingly recognised. At the time of the audit, eight people were doing OU's Postgraduate Diploma in Tertiary Teaching. At AU, a Tutor Training Certificate is available, and a Diploma in Tertiary Teaching being developed. LU is planning a programme for continuing professional education of academic staff that would result in the award of a certificate. MU has drafted a teaching skills development strategy that would involve a staff member in 30 hours participation over a two to three year probationary period, and may lead to a teaching certificate.

With most contemplating developments of this sort, it is not obvious that the demand can support seven professional certificate programmes. While each university has some specific requirements that are best served in-house, there is scope for inter-institutional collaboration. Sector-wide attention to this was focused by a conference on teacher accreditation sponsored by the AUS.

6.4 Learning

There is an increasing emphasis, internationally as well as in New Zealand, on 'learning as opposed to teaching'. This is a welcome move, as a lecturer focused on teaching may plan what s/he intends to do, and then take the attitude that it is entirely the students' responsibility as to whether they learn. Good teachers, of course, have always recognised that the function of their teaching is to enable and assist students to learn, and have planned their teaching in that way. Effective learning requires interaction between teacher, student and content, whereas the emphasis on teaching can lead the teacher to focus on 'covering the material' in a way that is consistent with the characteristics of the discipline, but without considering how the students will interact with the content and methods so as to learn.

In some cases, however, the new emphasis on learning has nothing to do with pedagogy and everything to do with cost. If the students can be required to do more, the teacher can do less, and the cost per student is reduced. This is an invalid justification for the change in emphasis, because pedagogical considerations must always be central. This invalid rationale was not observed in the AAU audits. Of course, practicalities may mean that, finally, out of a range of possible teaching methods of varying effectiveness, a cheaper one must be used, even if it is somewhat less effective.

In the first cycle of audits, the NZ universities were just beginning to address this shift from teaching to learning. Over the three years to 1998, LU undertook a major review of academic programme delivery. Following this, learning outcomes were defined and teaching and assessment were configured to meet those outcomes, rather than focusing on teaching inputs such as class time. The achievement of objectives is to be checked by questionnaire.

In 1997, AU introduced the Vice-Chancellor's Symposia on Enhancing Learning. That year's three topics were: the first year experience, evaluating teaching (the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality), and interpretation of the Course Experience Questionnaire, all led by authoritative overseas speakers. Departments are encouraged to follow-up the ideas introduced in the symposia, and explore the practical implications for AU.

At most universities, course guides are produced, giving students information on prerequisites, schedules, organisation, objectives, content, teaching methods, workload, assignment dates and methods and weightings, requirements, references, staff and other contacts, grievance procedures, etc. At several universities, the AAU commented on the high quality of these, but in some cases also advocated a more common format. These guides or outlines establish a form of contract between the university and the student in relation to the subject. At VU, each course guide is checked against a VU checklist by the faculty Workloads and Assessment Committee, which comments to the department on variations. This checking process has improved the completeness of course outlines, and students recognise their quality and utility.

In one discipline at one university, the AAU noted that tutorial sessions are split into groups according to their ethnicity. The AAU investigated this and was reassured that it has an appropriate androgogical rationale, and that these sessions are only part of the learning experience for the course, the rest being integrated.

6.5 Assessment

In 1996, OU commissioned an external review of assessment policies and practices. It then produced a Policy on Assessment of Student Performance, which gives appropriate weight to both formative and summative assessment, and the relation of paper weighting to the number, timing and size of assignments.

At VU, each faculty has a Workloads and Assessment Committee. The core duties of these committees are to monitor: course outlines and assessment requirements against University and faculty requirements (see above); student workloads against faculty guidelines; examination statistics against typical results; and triennial course reports.

At one university, the AAU observed the use of flexible approaches to assessment, including individual learning contracts and discussing assessment methods with students.

External examiners or assessors

External examiners are appointed for all postgraduate degrees and most honours courses. Their use is increasing at 300 level, to ensure national and international equivalence. External examiners reports inspected by the AAU were very thorough, although sometimes limited in scope.

Just before the academic audit, VU had begun a regular and systematic collection of assessors' reports. The intent is to produce a brief overview report, take up any emerging issues with departments, and make recommendations to the Academic Board. This process should permit improvements on two levels, as it will reveal any shortcomings in the external examiner system, and any common concerns that are expressed in the reports themselves.

Workload & credits

Workload is a concern for students in several universities, exacerbated in at least two cases by semesterisation, which almost inevitably results in a concentration of assessment activity. The universities concerned were monitoring the situation and making adjustments as necessary. The other structural concern is the parity of workload for equivalent credits, and several universities were actively working on this matter.

'Extended' course guidelines

Mention is made above of the common practice of providing course outlines to students. Some institutions are moving beyond what is described above to the provision to students, in advance of an assignment, grading criteria that indicate the assessment weighting of various factors (such as further reading, innovative thinking, accuracy, format, etc.) The intent is that students should be aware of what is needed to achieve the various grades (without effectively instructing the students how to do the assignment). With increasing emphasis on learning outcomes, this is an important development.

MU has guidelines for the expected distribution of final grades. The AAU commented that "there are many factors associated with final grade distributions that require a very flexible interpretation of such a guideline".

Consistency

"Consistency is vital in assessment, and this needs clear and comprehensive specifications together with mutual agreement on their interpretation." The AAU commended or recommended various mechanisms for achieving this consistency. Few universities have guidelines for new lecturers about allocating grades, there can be widely different interpretations across an institution of what comprises 'satisfactory' or 'excellent', and patterns of grading are passed on from senior to junior lecturers.

In at least two universities, grade distributions are published and compared to norms, and pass rates in various classes are analysed. 'Anomalous' results are then followed up in various ways with the departments concerned. MU has a policy on comparability of

examinations across modes and campuses. At LU, three sample assessments are submitted with any subject proposal.

Group work

Group work has many benefits, and students find it interesting and useful. The AAU investigated this in some detail at one university and listed various steps that are needed to ensure the quality of the experience. These include preparing students for work in groups (how to run a group and how it should work); making the objectives and assessments consistent (if the group learning experience is the aim, do not merely test the content); implementing assessment that is fair to all (a group assignment mark affects each individual in the group but is not totally within the control of any individual): and providing facilities for group work.

Work experience

Work placements are another valuable learning mechanism that is used in some programmes in some universities. They need an appropriate support structure (including placement methods, written specification of the expectations of the institution, the student, and the employer, monitoring during the placements, assessment, etc.) and these are being developed.

7 Research and Teaching

7.1 The Research Environment

Culture

Research is a defining characteristic of a university, and it must therefore be an integral part of the university's policy, planning and activities. This is sometimes encapsulated in the term 'research culture'. At the time of the audits, MU seemed to be paying the most explicit attention to this because of the development of the Albany campus. In one case, the AAU warned of the possibility of damaging the research culture by too great a focus on output measures and emphasis on funding.

LU uses a wide definition of research, to include fundamental and applied research and scholarship. The term 'scholarship' is used to encompass what counts for research in different disciplines, and also interdisciplinary aspects.

Policy

In view of this characterisation of a university, research policies were surprisingly ill-formed, although AU had a comprehensive, explicit and public policy covering issues such as costing procedures, outside activities, intellectual property, ethics, doctoral study off campus, and the distinction between research units, centres and institutes.

At one university, the AAU pointed out that "too strong a financial focus in research orientation will detract from the ability of some departments to achieve the research development required by the [mission]", but encouraged another "to be aware of market indicators and alert to possible markets for its research".

Selectivity is essential, balancing self-selected research with institutional coherence. OU has identified research themes, emerging research themes, and areas of research excellence. The University has committed itself to supporting the identified areas, and they are to be taken into account when appointing staff. Elsewhere, the AAU recommended some greater selectivity. It also pointed out that "strong departmental independence is not conducive to interdisciplinary research".

Selectivity in a different dimension was evident at VU, where the 'Mission and Goals' stated that the University will negotiate different conditions of employment with staff in selected areas "in order to enable them to devote more time to research", and with other staff "in order to enhance quality in teaching programmes".

Plans/Strategy

Research plans and strategies were also at an early stage of development. In one case, the plan was expected to be complete within six months; in another, the university itself reported that its research plan was "too general, and lacking specific targets".

Planning is also quite distributed across each institution. At MU, research is driven by staff research interests and the teaching programme. At WU, schools (faculties) develop their own research strategies within the central framework. At VU, departments develop operational plans and pass them via deans to the Planning and Resources Committee. The AAU commented in one case that too great a distribution of funds and responsibilities can increase variability and decrease flexibility and efficiency

External grants and links

All the universities have been successful, some outstandingly so, in obtaining grants from the PGSF and the Marsden Fund, from other agencies such as the Health Research Council where relevant, and from other outside sources. Administratively, some of these funds are handled by the Research Office and some by the technology company.

Several universities have active links with CRIs, to the benefit of both staff and students. There are shared appointments, joint fund applications, joint supervision of research students, collaborative consultancies, student work placements in the CRIs, and graduate placements in the CRIs. OU is also emphasising research co-operation externally with other universities and industry. At WU, the AAU pointed out that “the current focus of targeting research at external funding agencies has clear implications for the [strategic plan] (and vice versa)”.

Internal grants

All universities set aside some funds from which staff may seek research grants. In some cases, priority is given to new staff and new researchers who may be less able to win funds from external sources. Such targeting is particularly valuable, but if nothing internal is available after a start-up period, research directions will “be driven solely by the sources of external research funding”. Some faculties use a points system based on previous research performance and outputs.

The increasing constraints on resources are diminishing the funds available, so the maximum grant size is decreased. This means there is little possible reward for the effort of applying; but more seriously, there may be a large gap between the maximum grant available internally and the minimum grant available externally.

The AAU investigated OU’s provision for its far-flung clinical schools, and noted good support for research at Christchurch and Wellington, and a travel fund to move staff between the campuses.

Publications/PIs

Several universities claimed to be ‘exceptional’ or ‘excellent’ in research on the basis of the high number of publications. One problem with this is that the universities do not use the same criteria for different types of publications. Work was done on this in 1997 in a benchmarking exercise between the NZ universities and some Australian universities, using 1993/94 data, but the Australian system has now been revised and further benchmarking is required.

OU was working on an extensive project to identify or develop a better range of PIs to form a research PI model and reduce the heavy dependence on bulk funding. Ways in which funding would be based on the model were yet to be determined. "There is a need for mutual accommodation over the weightings chosen in combining PIs into a funding system, for continuity in use of the weightings chosen, and for any new system to remain in place for several years". At MU, a research outputs database was set up in 1996, which will allow monitoring of trends. To supplement measures such as publications and research income, "peer review and evaluation of the quality of the articles produced and journals reviewed are being considered".

7.2 Postgraduate Students

Variability

The central observation is that the postgraduate student experience is very variable, both within and between universities. The main reason for this is a slowness to adjust to new circumstances. The old model of a small number of brilliant apprentices attached to an eminent researcher no longer suffices for dealing with much greater numbers of students (and staff). Explicit action is required in order to ensure consistent achievement of high levels of effectiveness and success.

The following comments appear in various AAU audit reports:

- "There are signs that the policies are not being systematically and consistently implemented across [the university] and consequently postgraduate students have quite variable experiences."
- "There was no well-defined plan and policy for graduate supervision and facilities, no system to deal with problems, no priority-setting mechanism, and no process to get feedback from students. ... Support and induction experiences vary a lot between departments."
- "The experiences of postgraduate students are very mixed, and the panel heard of great variation in support, resources and reporting processes for students."

The AAU frequently mentioned the following points for attention

- Streamlining the enrolment process
- Compulsory induction programmes for all postgraduate students
- Compulsory training for supervisors
- Multiple supervisors to be the norm
- Establishment of a 'contract' between supervisor and student
- Regular and meaningful reports on progress
- Explicit commitment to the resources that will be provided

Despite the above observations, many students find their postgraduate work and experiences to be excellent, rewarding and successful. At MU, for example, the AAU found "an excellent quality assurance programme in place for PhD study". As part of the process of enhancing the experience for all students, the universities have agreed that provision for postgraduate students will be addressed again in the second audit cycle.

Masters students

Whereas PhD regulations are institutional, masters degree regulations are usually faculty-based, and may even vary within faculties. The entry criteria, enrolment and support of masters students are often the responsibility of individual departments, and masters students have correspondingly variable experience of the support they receive. Good examples of this were seen at WU, where each school (faculty) has appointed a pro-dean with responsibility for graduate students (that is students enrolled for masters degrees other than the MPhil); and at LU, where coursework provision is well-handled in both postgraduate diplomas and coursework masters.

Manuals

Various documents exist to guide the processes relating to postgraduate study. OU has a thorough compilation in the ‘Postgraduate Prospectus’, ‘Information for Master’s Degree Candidates’, and ‘Handbook for PhD Study’. MU has a useful ‘Handbook for Doctoral Study’. Elsewhere universities were in the process of drafting policy documents, covering the responsibilities and expectations of supervisors and students, and manuals setting out the procedures to be followed in order to achieve these expectations. The AAU noted in one case that "while it is often clear what to do if there is a major problem (such as irreconcilable disagreement with a supervisor), it is not so clear how to deal with minor problems"; and also that "mechanisms are needed to ensure that procedures are followed".

Contracts

The AAU has commented that "it is essential that students and supervisors are advised and assisted to formalise in some way their mutual understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of both sides. This formalisation might, for example, be by explicit discussion, recorded in a written contract." Such requirements already exist in some universities. For example, at MU, "PhD candidates and supervisors are required to agree on a statement of expectations (a ‘contract’)", while at CU, the PhD guidelines state that "the supervisor and student are required to enter into a clear understanding at the beginning of the supervision as to the form the supervision will take".

Supervisors

The universities are increasingly recognising that it cannot simply be assumed that all academics can act successfully as postgraduate supervisors without preparation, advice and support. This is partly because a higher proportion of staff need to take on this task as the universities increase the proportion of postgraduate students.

At MU, "all staff are required to attend a workshop on supervision before they are appointed as a PhD supervisor for the first time, and MU has a Research Training Subcommittee to co-ordinate this. This Subcommittee provides three workshops, namely ‘PhD supervision’, ‘Research: getting started’, and ‘Research funding and management’." At LU, "a staff member is not appointed as a principal supervisor until s/he has acted as an associate supervisor", and there are workshops for staff and students on academic

supervision. OU runs courses for supervisors and there is mutual supervisor support and development in some departments via the department postgraduate advisory committee. Although the OU courses are voluntary, the Board of Graduate Studies does not appoint untrained supervisors as sole supervisors.

Continuing support for supervisors is provided at MU through the School of Graduate Studies, which consists of all past and present PhD supervisors, and meets annually. At LU, it is expected that supervisors should receive mentoring within the department. As a partial monitoring of supervisors, MU keeps records of examiners' gradings, while at VU, staff development unit evaluations are used.

It is now common for each student to have more than one supervisor. This is very helpful both academically (providing a broader range of knowledge and experience) and personally (in case friction develops between the student and one supervisor).

The converse consideration is the number of students a single staff member can supervise concurrently. There are so many factors involved that it is difficult to apply a general rule, and one approach is to survey the students of 'heavily-loaded' supervisors from time to time (as MU did a few years ago). A more comprehensive solution is to ensure that account is taken of staff workloads, and that postgraduate supervision is included in the calculation. The practice in this matter is surprisingly varied, and the AAU recommended in a couple of instances that such recognition be given in a systematic way.

In several universities, a student's supervisor is also one of that student's examiners. "The AAU recognises that such an arrangement may occasionally be unavoidable, but believes that it should not be the norm" because of the evident likelihood of conflict of interest. The policy is now generally being changed.

Training and support for postgraduate students

Research students need certain skills which, depending on their background, they may not previously have acquired. These include such things as data collection, statistical methods, qualitative analysis, time management and thesis writing, as well as specially-designed induction courses for foreign students. It may once have been possible for supervisors to cover these individually and ad hoc, but now it is more efficient and effective to cover them for larger groups of students at one time.

MU "attempts to determine at the time of a student's application whether s/he has had an adequate preparation in research methods, or whether there are any generic gaps that should be addressed". Some MU departments also have specific compulsory programmes after enrolment. At AU, the staff development unit provides a programme of courses for PhD students.

WU's Centre for Science, Mathematics and Technology Education Research has regular Supervision Support Meetings for all research students and supervisors in the Centre. These are an effective vehicle for providing students with specific research skills, and also for enabling the students and supervisors to air in a general forum problems that they may

be unwilling to take up individually. Also, WU's research company, Unilink addresses considerations relating to student involvement when it sets up research contracts.

In addition to special training for students, a backup provision often exists in the form of a department or faculty person or group with responsibility for overseeing postgraduate students. OU allocates supervisors and projects to foreign students before they come, so they do not waste their first few months' costs in negotiating a project.

Resources

Postgraduate students require a range of resources, including laboratories and equipment, study space, library and IT facilities, travel, etc. and universities are often hard-pressed to provide them. In most universities, the support varies greatly between departments - a situation that students are less likely to accept when they are paying the same high fees.

MU "monitors whether a department can provide adequate support, and departments are prodded to provide more funds when possible". OU has a stated commitment to "taking on students only when resources permit", but there is always some flexibility in what might be considered essential. LU makes a specific per capita allocation to each department in respect of each of its research students.

At one university, the AAU observed that "increasingly students are not provided with adequate computing power and therefore buy their own machines. They then work at home, so there are fewer people in the department, which consequently provides a less lively and stimulating environment, and the postgraduate research experience becomes more solitary." At another university, the AAU noted that it was shortage of space that led many students to work at home, "thereby missing the collegial element of postgraduate study".

Universities attempt to assist students by providing scholarships, but many have been reduced in number or amount, or are expected to cover an increasing proportion of the essential costs of postgraduate study. Some scholarships are available specifically to Maori students.

Reporting

With increasing numbers of postgraduate students, it has become necessary to have a more formal approach to obtaining regular reports from supervisors and students, in order to ensure that students are progressing satisfactorily, or that timely action is taken when this is not the case. All universities therefore have rules about these reports, which are required at six- or twelve-monthly intervals. At MU, for example, six-monthly reports are produced by and for each postgraduate student, and these are handled effectively, by the faculty representative and another member of the Doctoral Research Committee. Students are welcome to contact any member of the Committee for advice or assistance.

In most universities, the AAU observed defects in the reporting process, including superficiality, lateness, lack of meaningful input from the student. Several universities had detected the problems and were beginning to address them.

Students associations

In several universities, postgraduate students are the poor relations in the matter of support from a students association, and on two occasions the AAU suggested the university's students associaiton, together with the university, "should form and nurture a postgraduate students association".

CU already has a Postgraduate Students Society, affiliated to the CU Students Association, which arranges three or four meetings annually on study-related issues, and these are attended by up to 200 students. In 1994, the Society carried out a survey of students' experience of resources and supervision. The OU Postgraduate Students Association has an office in the DVC(Research & International)'s area. Students can come with problems that are not proving to be tractable at departmental level, or for first-stop advice on how to address minor problems in a sensitive way.

In some universities, there is effective student membership of the Research Committee and Higher Degrees Committee, and in two institutions the AAU recommended such membership.

7.3 Research/Teaching Nexus

During this century, the existence of a link between teaching and research has become a basic assumption in many universities. Recently, this assumption has been questioned, and therefore investigated. Investigation by AU drew on the work of Brew and Boud (Brew, A., and Boud, D. (1995), 'Teaching and research: establishing the vital link with learning', *Higher Education, 29*, 261-273) who have sought to establish the link through the concept of 'learning'. Concepts of learning and research reveal many common areas, including enquiry, self-reflection and the development of new meaning. Since the focus is switching from the teaching activity of the lecturer to the learning activity of the student, this is a helpful interpretation. The research project at AU is intended to investigate the link and the way it is perceived. A broader context is provided by Boyer's identification of four categories of 'scholarship' (Boyer, E.L. (1990), 'Scholarship reconsidered: the priorities of the professoriate', Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching).

The research/teaching nexus has typically been interpreted in terms of a paradigm in which each staff member spends one third of their time on each of research and teaching. This paradigm permits (the often false) assumption that the staff member's research will inform their teaching in a positive and effective way. This paradigm fails to take account of the cyclical nature of research participation and productivity, and the establishment of new departments where the heavy demand is for teaching, perhaps resulting in the appointment of 'teaching-mainly' staff. As these considerations are taken into account, more explicit attention must be paid to achieving the research/teaching link, rather than assuming that it will happen automatically. The reward system must also be structured appropriately.

When asked about the link, staff point to the link at postgraduate level, but the legislation requires the link for all degree courses. Staff therefore point out that undergraduates are taught in a 'research-informed' way, not being simply presented with facts or techniques, but provided with explanations, and suggestions about the questions that characterise the discipline. Conversely, many undergraduate students are conscious of and positive about

staff research activities. Some undergraduates are included in staff research projects, although others see the staff research as competing for time with the student.

At MU, appraisal processes for academic staff are to include a review of the steps taken by staff to actively enhance the links between their research and their teaching, but more work is needed to implement this intention. At CU, the AAU “formed a very positive view of the way in which research informs teaching”. In some cases, LU is linking the research factor with the assessment, for example by means of an assessment based on a research paper. OU’s Teaching and Learning Plan refers to the role of research in the support of teaching and learning. The PIs identified this goal are relevant publications, departmental plans, departmental reviews, and stakeholder surveys.

8 Reviews

8.1 Background

Universities have always monitored their own performance. This monitoring has been done more or less systematically at different times. It has become increasingly systematic over recent decades, but until recently a significant review of a department or faculty was a response to a perceived crisis, rather than a normal event. In this the educational sector has not been alone, as the business world has only recently discovered the value of systematic and comprehensive attention to quality.

When the AAU was created, most but not all New Zealand universities were carrying out regular planned reviews of academic departments on a multi-year cycle. By the end of the first cycle of audits, all universities had such a system in place, with a cycle length of three to seven years, and in some cases extending also to the non-academic areas. AU was the first university to introduce cycles of departmental reviews (in the 1980s); at LU the departmental reviews have been run in parallel with programme reviews, which is comprehensive but represents a heavy load.

In each university, the AAU investigated the review procedure, read many of the review reports, and for a sample of reviews tracked the consequences of the recommendations emanating from the review. Findings are summarised in section 8.2.

There are, of course, still the special-purpose reviews for topics or areas that need specific attention. This shades into other aspects. For example, it has been mooted within AU that there be a reduction in the use of standing committees and a greater use of ad hoc committees. These would not be unlike reviews, except that their membership and input would probably be almost entirely intramural. At the time of the audit, WU was considering new review procedures that would apply to reviews of the main processes, to ad hoc reviews and working parties.

8.2 Review Procedures

At one university, the AAU found inadequacies in the review process, but that the procedures for handling the review recommendations were "rapid and thorough, and generally effective". A more common finding was that the reviewing was done well, but there were gaps in the subsequent implementation process, especially after the first flush of enthusiasm.

The review report often goes first to the VC, who decides on specific responsibilities. The AAU recommended to one university that "a detailed time line for action, with responsibilities assigned, should be specified at an early stage when it is still under the close purview of the VC". Reviews often have resource implications, and at VU the Planning and Resources Committee is involved at an early stage of the implementation to avoid one area being advantaged by the chance of the timing of its review report. At LU, where the AAU noted that "the processes as set down appear to be effective, and their implementation thorough ... the PVC works through with the relevant staff the recommendations of the review, identifies actions needed, and assigns responsibility for

those. This responsibility is recorded, and reports are made at intervals until all are explicitly signed off." Periodic summary reports should go to Council (as at CU).

In most universities, there are template terms of reference, but in at least one they tend to be set (at the highest level) for each review. The former has the advantage of consistency and comparability. Universities should build on that by analysing reviews of different areas for emerging patterns. AU review panels include AU academics, academics from other universities, overseas members, and professional members when appropriate. This is a fairly typical composition. Where a panel is required to evaluate teaching and learning, it would be appropriate for it to audit classes and inspect marked assignments, but this rarely occurs. In one case, the AAU pointed out that, in a programme review, the panel should "check the achievement of the programme's objectives".

During the period of the audit cycle, three universities reviewed and revised their review process, two introduced new procedures, and one was considering new procedures. OU's new procedure "includes many features that should facilitate an effective process. Before any evaluation begins, a budget will be determined, staff will be trained in the preparation of reviews, access will be given to relevant information, and administrative support will be provided. [Each departmental review is to cover] the quality of teaching, learning, research supervision, research and professional activities".

In MU's new system, "a three-year funding cycle is envisaged for faculties (colleges) and departments. In addition to annual monitoring of performance in relation to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), each entity will be subject to a comprehensive triennial review linked to the beginning of a new funding cycle. All papers are to be reviewed within a five-year period ... .The results of the paper reviews carried out in any year must be reported at the end of the year, either in the context of that year's KPI report, or in the context of the comprehensive triennial review." The AAU cautioned that "the implementation of this system will require continuous attention", as otherwise " the opportunity may be lost for the benefits that can arise from less frequent thorough department or programme reviews".

8.3 Beyond Reviews

In 1997, LU reviewed the review process to consider the load and effectiveness of reviews. It intends to identify KPIs that will provide complete and co-ordinated information about programmes, that programmes report annually in terms of the KPIs, and only those programmes which appear to be below average in certain well-defined respects be reviewed. The AAU observed that this scheme "has the potential to lose the valuable external input provided by external members of review panels", so it would be necessary to ensure that external input is obtained in other ways. WU is also grappling with the drawback of a cyclic review process, namely that it can result in reviews being carried out when they are not needed, yet not when they are.

At two universities, the AAU found that the review process was being used as the planning mechanism. This partially offset the lack of a planning process, but at the expense of distorting the review process.

9 Feedback Processes

9.1 Extramural Views

As noted in Chapter 8, institutional self-monitoring has become increasingly systematic over recent decades. This monitoring now usually includes obtaining explicit advice from various interested groups ('stakeholders'). These include intramural constituencies (such as staff and students), expert commentators (such as external examiners and professional associations), and other extramural constituencies (such as alumni and employers).

Since the totality of stakeholders embraces quite different needs and opinions, there are inherent difficulties in interpreting and using stakeholder input. For example, even a small sample of employers can include the opposing views that graduates should be specialists and graduates should be generalists. When industrial interests are invited to suggest what they want, problems experienced from time to time with the responses include

- slowness of response
- suggestions too narrow and precise
- suggestions too general
- suggestions that prove to be unattractive to students.
- lack of specificity, so for example, calls for ‘core skills’ can mean interdisciplinary or discipline-based work
- targeting yesterday’s problems, whereas it is the task of the university to have foresight and educate for the future

Such difficulties indicate the need for consultation (as for example through advisory committees); designing objectives that are known to satisfy at least some stakeholders; and then focused marketing, with explicit publicity about what is and is not provided.

Advisory committees

Various faculties and departments have advisory committees or boards of studies with external members. Such committees are effective only if well-organised. In one or two cases the AAU commented that the outside contacts do not always have adequate opportunity for substantive input. Some institutions take the view that the advisory committee is of greatest value when a new programme is being established, and that it is not cost-effective to have continuing meetings thereafter.

Professional disciplines

As might be expected, professional disciplines receive rather extensive external input. Indeed, at one university, the AAU commented that "external input occurs mainly where there is a defined market". Professional disciplines receive comment and advice from the respective professional association at the time of (re-)accreditation, and some "get feedback in the context of the practicum fieldwork experience, and also from agencies employing graduates".

LU has a close relation with professional associations, and AU has them represented on chair selection committees. There are LU representatives on Industry Training Organisations.

Alumni

For many years, the NZVCC has conducted an annual survey of graduate destinations. During the period covered by this report, two universities were using the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) for alumni input. (Since then, four more universities have begun to use it, and the seventh university is investigating the most suitable graduate surveying system for its needs.)

Links with alumni are stronger in some faculties than others, and are often strongest in the professional faculties. Contact with alumni is often made at faculty or department level, often in the context of a review. The AAU noted that WU has an active Alumni Association.

Employers

LU surveys employers, consults industry before setting practical work requirements, and obtains industry input to all programme reviews. Sector-wide, however, there is little evidence of systematic employer surveys, although of course employer views are encompassed within many of the other inputs mentioned in this section

Other inputs

All the universities attract feedback when they use their research to speak on societal issues. One university was able to report school students' opinions because of a survey carried out by and for another body.

Public relations

The AAU found that most communities hold a positive view of the local university, and most of the universities are seen to be adequately community-oriented. However, all have more work to do in projecting the desired image, and ensuring the local (and wider) community know and understand their objectives, their emphases and their successes.

9.2 The University of Otago System

Stakeholder surveys

In 1995, OU initiated a comprehensive, long-term process for obtaining and using comments from a range of stakeholders, in four groups. The groups and the respective survey instruments are described in the following extended summary from the OU audit report.

i. Undergraduate Student Opinion Survey (using a modified form of the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)): This uses a random sample of current students from half of OU’s

undergraduate programmes. Comparison of the responses of alumni and current students was very instructive. This is to be repeated each year for a rolling quarter of programmes.

ii. Postgraduate Student Opinion Survey (using a modified form of the CEQ): This uses a random sample of current students from all research programmes, and is to be repeated each year for a rolling quarter of programmes.

iii. Graduate Course Experience Survey (using the CEQ): This surveys a cohort of graduates. In addition to the CEQ, the graduates were also asked to assess the extent to which they had developed a number of generic attributes through their study, and the extent to which they have subsequently applied these. The survey is to be repeated every four years.

iv. Employers' Survey: This covers a selection of major employers of graduates from those programmes selected for the Student Opinion Surveys. Employers were asked about desirable employment attributes, and the extent to which they are demonstrated by OU graduates. To be repeated each year for the programmes used for the Student Opinion Surveys. Employers were also asked to rate OU graduates against other graduates (94% rated OU graduates as good or better than others); and to comment on OU-employer links (80% rated them as good or average).

Outcomes

"Some actions are already being taken as a result of these surveys, and targets have been set for future action, eg an ethics course introduced in Commerce, and a research skills course in Law. There is a big impact in Health Sciences, with the introduction of courses for developing English language skills, and data from the surveys being input to the recent pharmacy review. Attention is also being paid to more generic or 'lifelong learning' skills. Criticisms of some central services are also being addressed."

9.3 Benchmarking

Since inter-institutional staff visits, including sabbatical leave, have been a feature of the international university scene for a long time, universities would claim (correctly) that benchmarking is an integral feature of the system. More recently, however, the private sector has developed more systematic concepts of benchmarking, and it is this meaning that is used here.

OU was well advanced in systematic benchmarking, and intends to make extensive use of it. Four projects were in progress and two more under development at the time of the audit. Recognising a factor crucial to the success of benchmarking, OU is allocating funds to support it.

AU is a member of Universitas 21, a grouping of about 20 similar institutions world-wide. The group provides a framework for the exchange of best practices and comparison of performance. Members intend to benchmark against each other, knowing that the institutions are sufficiently similar for benchmarking to be meaningful. Over time coherent

and comparable data bases are to be built up for the purpose. Another goal is the mutual recognition of courses and the ready exchange of staff and students.

9.4 Intramural Systems

Within the institution methods are needed for obtaining input from students and staff, and for ensuring that information and communication flows adequately in all the necessary directions. Input from staff is expected to occur through the 'normal' university channels, but these are not always effective, and ancillary methods are needed. At LU, the annual Council/staff forum has become increasingly effective over the 4-5 years of its existence; and at both LU and MU the willingness of senior management to receive direct email comment has been most helpful.

All institutions have and use indicators of their performance, and clearly the information obtained from the various constituencies in the various ways mentioned above should give rise to indicators (numeric and descriptive). Some of the universities had particular indicator-related projects under way. MU, for example, was developing a set of Key Performance Indicators; LU is investigating the possibility of identifying a small number of critical points and then concentrating attention on these points; and at AU departments were developing performance indicators which were then to be commented on by two similar departments from institutions belonging to Universitas 21.

MU's audit portfolio identified a need for a better institutional research capability, and this would apply elsewhere also. At one university, the AAU commented that "effective information systems are needed to support staff in meeting their responsibilities, and to permit adequate attention to be given to accountability". In general, institutions should not collect more data than can be used, should ensure it gets to the people who can use it, and should check that they do in fact use it.

In most institutions, the AAU drew attention to the need for the Council to explicitly review and/or monitor its own performance, and several are grappling with this. (This difficult task is an issue of current international attention.)

(Input from and communication to students is covered in Chapters 6 and 11.)

10 Joint, Franchised and External Programmes

10.1 National Links

Context

Joint activities between institutions can take advantage of the different strengths and location of each (although the incentives for competition make collaboration somewhat more difficult to achieve). The institution in whose name a jointly-presented qualification is awarded should ensure that the qualification is of the same standard as its other qualifications, so it can legitimately enjoy the same reputation. Therefore in auditing the universities, the AAU enquired about the universities' quality assurance procedures as they applied to joint activities and to the partners in those joint activities.

If the collaborating institution is itself subject to adequate external checking of quality procedures, mutual recognition of general quality assurance measures may be satisfactory.

Guidelines

At CU and OU there are only one and two joint programmes, respectively, these joint activities are of long-standing, and the quality procedures are satisfactory. The other universities have explicit structures for establishing and maintaining joint activities. AU's bilateral arrangements are based on a formal Memorandum of Understanding; VU's Criteria for Inter-Institutional Alliances deal with strategic issues, and a related Checklist deals with implementation details, such as finance, student services etc; WU has a handbook and model contract for articulation arrangements; MU has clear but flexible procedures for managing conjoint programmes; and LU's articulation agreement with Nelson Polytechnic is a good model for collaboration.

Initiation and monitoring

In AU's work with Northland Polytechnic, the academic qualifications and teaching experience of potential tutors from the Northland staff are considered by the AU appointments process and AU criteria are used to decide on the appointments. Tutors sometimes receive training by the relevant academic department in AU. Course monitoring and students support are carried out through the procedures of each institution.

A similar process of approval of polytechnic tutors and occasional training at the University is used by MU in its conjoint programmes. MU departments have flexibility within the MU parameters. For example some do all the marking at MU; some let the polytechnic mark everything and sample a few scripts; and some depend on the strength of the extramural studies (EMS) materials (which MU uses as underlying support for all conjoint programmes, as necessary).

VU also retains the right of approving the staff appointed to teach the inter-institutional courses. Normal VU quality control procedures apply, including student evaluation of course and teachers, except that inter-institutional courses are evaluated every year, rather than every three years as is the case for VU courses. At AU, a specially appointed

joint board oversees the programmes, including monitoring the quality, and VU has also set up a group that will regularly monitor inter-institutional arrangements for quality assurance, and report to the Academic Board.

At WU, specific agreements are between the individual school and the external institution. This means that a polytechnic with several agreements may have to interact differently with different schools; and that each school is responsible for the quality in the links. Mechanisms for quality include tutor training, frequent visits, moderation reports, and occasional reviews.

Comparators

Data on the performance at WU of students from articulation courses shows that their performance is very close to that of other students. Following a year in a conjoint programme, a student may move to internal study at MU or into the EMS mode. In either case, their performance is found to compare favourably with that of other students in the same mode and paper. Comparisons are made within CU courses of students who have entered from earlier CU courses or from the Christchurch College of Education, and the performances are similar.

10.2 International Links

LU has extensive overseas activities, the quality procedures for which are mostly the same as for the LU campus. Monitoring, including student feedback, is adequate to detect any problems. The AAU emphasised the need for LU to give attention to the matter of professional development for staff not employed at LU. A major programme is a commerce degree taught in Malaysia. There is a full-time staff member in Malaysia and some locally-employed staff, and LU staff teach in Malaysia for periods of various lengths. When LU staff are overseas, their LU duties are covered.

At the time of the audit, AU was just reconsidering its large number of foreign links with the intent of terminating those of little value to the University. It is intended that all future agreements be made under a AU protocol, with an emphasis on networking, high standards required of incoming international exchange students, and support and credits guaranteed for outgoing exchange students. The AAU stressed that internationalisation, has implications for the curriculum, the student experience, and staff development.

10.3 Distance Education

The major provider of distance education is MU, whose EMS are integrated with the internal programme activities (but are mentioned in this chapter for convenience). “Extramural courses are delivered via printed, audio and video study materials using correspondence, residential components and electronic means. ... The EMS materials are of a high standard, and EMS students report that they are well supported by the library and the regional advisers.”

“EMS work is integrated into a staff member’s workload, or the internal and EMS work are done by different staff. Training to handle the EMS is provided within the department as

well as by Extramural Teaching Consultants. Study guide writing is a major task in which all staff participate. Writers are trained and supported by educational consultants."

Courses come under the SECAT surveys, and a joint survey instrument is being designed to cover all the service providers (including the extramural service). Monitoring of standards is carried out by comparing the internal and EMS marks.

WU started to develop distance education to build the student base, contribute to the region and provide study opportunities in the student's location. The distance education is almost entirely provided in face-to-face mode by tutors appointed and trained by the respective WU schools. Distance education students perform on average half a grade above on-campus students.

OU has recently switched to a model in which individual departments responsible for their own programmes, overseen by a Senate committee, and with staff development unit training. Other quality mechanisms include: regular re-writing of course books; professional editing of course books; common final examination with on-campus students; external examiners; participating in each other's examiners' meetings; and comparison with NZQA unit standards.

10.4 Continuing Education

Centres for continuing education are under increasing pressure. Other departments or other institutions poach the more profitable courses. The reduction in clientele leads to the second pressure, namely a push to be entrepreneurial and emphasise vocational courses. This however leaves the 'equity and disadvantaged' groups less well served. No universities have registered any of their courses on the NQF, but for short, non-degree courses, this restriction may be counter-productive.

"By agreement between the universities, WU's Centre for Continuing Education provides programmes for Maori needs through New Zealand until other universities have the capacity to service their own regions." Naturally, WU's School of Maori and Pacific Development must take a large part in this. LU's Continuing Education Centre provides a valuable contribution to the community through short courses, South Island field days, immersion courses for the Singapore polytechnics, and conference organisation.

11 Support for Students

Under this heading are grouped the various supporting services that are provided for students by the university and/or by the students association. They are included within the scope of the AAU's audits because this support contributes materially to the students experience of the institution and to the academic outcomes. There is a very broad spectrum of such services. They include ones that the institution must provide and the students must use (such as admissions, enrolments, course advice, financial arrangements); ones that the institution must provide but which are then optional for students (such as grievance procedures and all the targeted provision, eg for Maori, or for students with disabilities); and ones that are optional on both sides - although some are highly important (such as financial advice, careers advice, health, counselling, catering, recreation). At various universities, the AAU investigated some of these services and reported on them briefly.

The AAU found clear evidence that the universities were improving their services to students over the period covered by this report.

11.1 General Services

Much action was occurring in an area that had been the subject of a good deal of student criticism, namely the registration process at enrolment. Student satisfaction with the process improved enormously at WU in the year of the audit; LU’s approach to improving the registration process over the last few years earned it an award from the NZ Organisation for Quality in 1997;and there was great satisfaction with the unified model for student services at MU's Albany campus.

The universities are making increasing use of systematic surveys of both users and non-users. At LU, student satisfaction surveys were begun in 1994, tracking one cohort and sampling others. These lead to a centrally co-ordinated action plan. OU is following up issues identified in the comprehensive 1995 surveys. At AU, where the services seemed to be generally of a high standard, a major survey was carried out in 1996, with the aims of: assessing client satisfaction; measuring students usage; raising awareness of student services; and assessing current and future needs. Building on the survey, a suite of PIs (quantitative and qualitative) is being developed. WU also carried out comprehensive surveys in 1996 with positive results, and is also setting up a benchmarking project with a university in the USA. Also in 1996, VU began a longitudinal study has begun that will measure use of services and its relationship with academic performance and dropping out.

VU and LU have liaison people in each department who can advise or refer students. The CU students association Education Co-ordinator performs a very effective link function, and at LU the services manager meets regularly with representatives of the students association. WU is working on a scheme for putting students in touch with an alumnus in their field of interest. At VU, students make positive comments about the services in relation to their deciding to remain at VUW.

Other observations at various universities include:

- rapid increase in use of services without corresponding resource increase;
- need for greater active identification of unmet and future student need, followed by forward planning;
- there is some action on outsourcing;
- the reduction in funding both requires students to have paid employment and increases student-staff ratios, and this is increasing the level of stress for both sides.

11.2 Learning Support

In addition to the specific tutorial, laboratory or other work peculiar to a programme, many students require further learning support. Since learning must be contextual, there is an argument that this should be provided within the department or faculty; but since it requires special teaching skills and is to be used by only a minority of the students, there is an argument that it should be provided by a central unit. The best solution may be as recommend by the AAU at one university, namely "there should be a small central academic support function that would act as a first stop for any student, that could provide generic courses (such as time and project management skills), and that could direct students to the distributed courses most appropriate to their needs in a knowledgable and helpful way".

AU's Student Learning Centre provides general support, as well as targeting specific groups (including Pacific Island and Asian students). It evaluates its performance both through student evaluations of the courses, and by comparing the subsequent performance of its students with both their previous performance and the performance of other students. (Both measures give consistently positive results.) In various universities, the AAU made positive comments on the quality of the service provided but pointed to the small quantity available (for example MU's Maori Learning Support Consultants and CU's Writing and Study Skills unit) - again a resource problem.

WU has a different model of student learning support, in that it is part of the staff development unit.

MU's Faculty of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences has an effective staff/student mentor scheme, and has just started a student/student mentor scheme. The AAU observed that "it may be necessary to consider specific incentives for student mentors, as they may have to choose between doing this work and taking paid employment as a tutor". At OU, the halls of residence provide extra tutorials and assistance with a wide range of study skills.

At one university the AAU commented that "more attention is needed to the transition to university" and this could be more generally applicable, both in ensuring that admission criteria are adequately enforced and in supporting students through the first-year experience. As more students do new course combinations, fewer academics are capable of providing adequate advice to students on these. At one university, the AAU

recommended training for academic advisers and a post-enrolment check of the course combinations selected.

At one university, the AAU commented that "the Liaison Officer finds an increasing amount of his time being spent on course advising after the students have entered". Liaison officers are also finding that the students that they contacted in schools also continue to seek them out for ongoing advice. This is particularly true of Maori liaison officers, and may be a growing trend that the institutions will need to address.

VU checks the course of study of all students to ensure that students who expect to complete a qualification have an appropriate enrolment.

11.3 Targeted Services

Universities identify various groups of students for specifically-designed services. At most universities, there is some special provision for Maori students and students with disabilities; other groups include women, foreign students (possibly with some discrimination between different cultures) and Pacific Island students. At some universities, use of general services by students in these groups is tracked to monitor the need or desire for targeted services. Another categorisation of targeting addresses the need for Equal Educational Opportunity.

Several universities invite students at enrolment to signal any special needs, and allocate resources to assist them. For several years, MU put aside funds to support disabled students. The students were consulted on the use of the funds, and following their response, a special purpose building was opened in 1996, and is heavily used and highly appreciated.

The AAU found that "in general, AU is providing well for groups with special needs. ... Special support mechanisms of various types, for students in general and for Maori students in particular, are available in most faculties. Commerce, Law and Medicine operate special quotas for Maori students, and support for the students once admitted. Engineering has a Liaison Officer for Women in Science and Engineering." Elsewhere, the AAU observed that "departments may need to pay particular attention" to the needs of different groups of students, and not assume they are adequately catered for by the ancillary support mechanisms.

International students are an increasing feature of the HE scene. The number of international and Asian migrant students forms 12% of MU's Albany student population, and workshops are provided for academic staff on working with Asian students. WU's International Office is "a one-stop shop, covering marketing and promotion as well as student support, and liaising with the international student counsellor in Student Services". The Office tracks applications and guarantees response times. If a student appears to need assistance from learning support, "the International Office will set up and pay for a session". The Office surveys all international students on enrolment and exit and compares the responses. LU's international students are also very well supported.

OU has a Disability Action Group that works closely with Works and Services on matters of access, and CU provides a good map for disabled students.

11.4 Grievances

The establishment of formal and effective student grievance policies is still under way. WU has an inclusive mediation policy, and positions the service as a grievance resolution service. The resolution rate is high. The Mediator has worked with Te Komiti Awhina to set up a Maori mediation system. If patterns of grievance emerged, the Mediator would report this to the VC. CU's Joint Academic Grievance Committee aims "to establish a climate to avoid problems, and to resolve them when they arise". Most are resolved informally, but the AAU suggested that more explicit procedures are required for the harder cases.

The AAU has commented that academic grievance procedures should be set out in a single policy, be linked to information on other matters such as appeals, and be published in the university Calendar

11.5 Class Representatives

Almost all the universities have a well-developed class representative system, which can be a very extensive operation: for example, in 1997, there were about 550 class representatives in AU, and CU typically has about 700. Details of the organisation and operation differ between institutions. In some cases, representatives operate largely independently, and in others the representative role includes membership of a staff-student consultative committee, at course, programme or department level. Another system is hierarchical, where student representatives on boards are also drawn from the class representative base. In some cases, a marae committee performs an analogous function for Maori students.

Difficulties inherent in the system include "finding someone prepared to take on the task of class representative, not knowing one's class representative in a large course, and transmitting matters of concern via a third person". A valuable enhancement to most systems would be a mechanism to integrate comments or problems coming from different directions, and detect broad problems and patterns.

Two common findings are that the system is well-supported by the students association, and its effectiveness depends on commitment at departmental level.

Students association

CU's students association convenes three meetings of the representatives each year, and writes to them twice per term. It also produces a handbook outlining the responsibilities of the class representatives, and the CU guidelines that the representatives are expected to monitor. Other students associations typically provide a manual and training, and some provide contact people to whom to refer for advice and support. At WU, students are

advised how to handle the "tension in the class representative role between consultant and advocate".

Departmental support

The AAU noted that "where staff are unhelpful in the appointment of or co-operation with class representatives, where the arrangements and procedures for the staff-student meeting do not include the students as full participants, or where HoDs are obstructive when class representatives need to bring issues to their attention, the system fails to achieve its potential. This is an area where the necessary co-operation of staff and departments should be a requirement." The AAU found at one university that the intended system was well-structured, but that "only about 30% of departments have the system in place".

11.6 Other Students Association Topics

In its audits, the AAU interviewed representatives of students associations (as well as individual students and groups of students). The AAU did not however audit the students associations themselves, so comments it made on the activities and effects of students associations were not comprehensive, but referred to only part of the associations' activities. Students generally have a positive opinion of their students association, but the extension of voluntary student membership of associations may diminish their beneficial role.

In several cases, the AAU recommended that "more introduction and training should be provided for students appointed to major committees". This would preferably be a joint undertaking of the university and the students association.

A comment made by the AAU in one report has wider applicability, namely "attention needs to be given to the relations between [the Maori students association, the university students association, and the university], to clarify the respective expectations and actions".

AU had an effective Study Support Group scheme to foster collaborative learning and peer support for first year learners. It was a joint project of the Counselling Service, the students association and the Student Learning Centre. It proved to be an ambitious project, and was being revised in 1997.

MU has an external students association which has a network of 70 representatives around the country, maintaining contact with their constituents.

Alternative Calendar

At AU, CU and WU, the students associations produce an 'Alternative Calendar', a commentary on courses, based on surveys designed to determine students' actual experience of courses. The AU students association finds that "it normally receives input from over 30% of the students in each paper, and distils the responses into a paragraph".

The WU survey is very professionally done, "low response rates are highlighted, and lecturer's comments are included".

Student Charter

At the time of the audits, student charters were being drafted at three universities. A comprehensive version seen by the AAU covered the responsibilities of the university, the students association, individual students, individual departments and staff. The AAU commented that any such document needs "mechanisms for its interpretation and implementation".

12 Facilities and Resources

12.1 Library

Resources

Resource constraints are affecting all institutions, and are very noticeable in the library area where the weakening of the New Zealand dollar has exacerbated the situation, especially in respect of the purchase of serials. No NZ university or research library scores at the internationally designated ‘research’ level in library conspectus surveys. Clearly it is essential to collaborate nationally on library development, to take best advantage of IT, and to find creative solutions. At AU, for example, the library is "aiming for access rather than ownership, buying databases and sharing the costs, providing a document delivery service, subsidising inter-library loans, and generally increasing the use of technology". Such sharing can be within or across institutions. However, although technological solutions may address space pressures, "they do not necessarily bring other cost savings, as they increase the staff costs to service the technology and the consequent service requests".

VU has decided to cap the growth of its local collection within the accommodation in its current building. This is consistent with the importance given to IT by the 1992 review that led to the establishment of the Information Technology Services. This review recommended concentrating on networking of systems and access to information, whether local or remote. OU is enhancing and co-ordinating the library and ITS activities.

Co-operative arrangements with other libraries outside the education sector have become more difficult with changing loan policies of other bodies, eg the CRIs. The extramural studies mode of education has had specific consequences for the MU library, which provides an extensive postal service, bibliographic research, and other electronic services for EMS students.

Communication

Most users report satisfactory to excellent library service, with the criticisms mainly confined to resource matters. Most universities have a library committee, which acts as a discussion forum, an adviser to the university on strategic issues, a user group advising the Librarian, and a communication link with faculties. Some have student representatives, and some are notable for the amount of consultation they undertake.

Some libraries have regular user surveys, and almost all make provision for receiving suggestions. The libraries run induction courses, including special-purpose ones, and these are generally seen as useful. At LU, the library works with departments to assist in providing literacy skills.

12.2 Computing Services

At one university, the AAU commented that "there is less satisfaction with information technology support [than with the library], but the [AAU] is aware that concerns about IT are often lumped together regardless of where the specific responsibilities lie". This observation would relate to several universities. As the provision of IT has grown rapidly (MU for example, now has 4000 personal computers, a ten-fold increase in ten years, but there is the same amount of resources available to support this increased user base), a common response has been to distribute the responsibility. At AU, a central system "provides an infrastructure based on Internet standards, and each faculty is then responsible for its own policies and procedures for investment in IT". At VU, Information Technology Services "sets interface standards, manages the network and provides some training and consultancy, with other services provided at departmental or faculty level".

Most universities keep in touch with their users in various formal and informal ways, through surveys, departmental representatives, and committee memberships. At two universities, the AAU felt that this contact was being neglected, and recommended a systematic survey of users and their satisfaction, ensuring that action is seen to follow, with specific attention be paid to priorities. The AAU also suggested that one university "identify what services could be segmented, develop a service specification, and investigate outsourcing them".

Most universities have an IT committee, with various lines of reporting. Some have cross-membership with the library committee, and at LU It is intended that there be a line manager responsible for library, IT and Education Centre functions. Where the interaction has been weaker, the AAU has recommended that it be strengthened to achieve a better alignment of the planning processes and assist in information provision in new ways, as for example required by the use of flexible learning systems.

AU makes extensive use of IT, including: provision of digital video; satellite broadcasts; visualisation systems in the Faculty of Architecture; multi-media product support facilities; CD-ROM development; computer-supported learning in the School of Business and Economics; digitising archives for enhanced utility; the use of video-conferencing; and the development of student administration, finance, HR and library systems.

12.3 Other Issues

Other facilities and resources are also under pressure, and the universities are trying to maintain educational activities under economic pressure. There can be significant variation between faculties within one university in student experience of the availability of facilities. Many people interviewed, from both within and without the universities, "expressed concern that resource constraints and work overload may lead to deteriorating standards in future".

Appendix A. Terms of Reference of the Academic Audit Unit

During the first cycle of audits, the Terms of Reference of the Academic Audit Unit were as follows:

i. to consider and review the universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the academic quality and standards which are necessary for achieving their stated aims and objectives;
ii. to comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities are applied effectively;
iii. to comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities reflect good practice in maintaining quality; and
iv. to identify and commend to universities good practice in regard to the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards at national level.

(Following an independent review of the AAU towards the end of the cycle, the terms of reference were broadened, and now are as follows:

i. to consider and review the universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the academic quality and standards which are necessary for achieving their stated aims and objectives;
ii. to comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities are applied effectively;
iii. to comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities reflect good practice in maintaining quality;
iv. to identify and commend to universities good practice in regard to the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards at national level;
v. to assist the university sector to improve its educational quality;
vi. to advise the NZVCC on quality assurance matters;
vii. to interact with other national and international agencies and organisations in relation to matters of quality assurance in education;
viii. to carry out such contract work as is compatible with its audit role.)

