

Enhancement Theme Symposium Report

31 October 2018

*Access, outcomes and opportunities for
Māori students and for Pasifika students*





Enhancement Theme Symposium 2018

Summary

The sixth cycle of Academic Audit for the New Zealand universities incorporates an enhancement theme and the first 3 years in the cycle constitute the enhancement phase of the cycle. An enhancement theme is a topic that is important to all universities and of national significance.

The universities held a first Enhancement Theme Symposium in Wellington on 31 October 2018 and brought together members of university senior leadership teams, academics, professional staff who support Māori students and development, professional staff who support Pasifika students and development, quality managers and students to share and critique initiatives on:

Access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students:

- For Māori, recognising Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the bicultural foundation of Aotearoa; and;
- For Pasifika, recognising the place of Aotearoa in the Pacific.

Participants found the day valuable and discussed:

- Access and transitions to university and the role and positioning of pathway programmes,
- What success means for Māori students and Pasifika students and how others contribute to success as well as the importance of the student voice, and
- Organisational change, including curriculum, student support systems and leadership and capacity in supporting success for Māori students and for Pasifika students.

Each university will utilise the experience and report from the Symposium as appropriate to their individual approaches and priorities in their own enhancement theme plans. It will also contribute to Te Kāhui Amokura and Komiti Pasifika workstreams as well as the Enhancement Theme objective of being “explicit and transparent about how NZ universities are working together to progress parity in access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori learners and for Pasifika learners”.

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Introduction

The first Enhancement Theme Symposium for New Zealand Universities was held in Wellington on 31 October 2018. It brought together members of university senior leadership teams, academics, professional staff who support Māori students and development, professional staff who support Pasifika students and development, quality managers and students to share and critique initiatives.

The objectives for the day were to share approaches and initiatives underway with respect to the enhancement theme, and to critique those approaches and explore what would be the implications of them operating at scale (either whole of university or nationally).

The day was structured according to the three areas of emphasis (topics) identified across the universities' enhancement theme plans:

- Access,
- Student success, and
- Organisational change;

plus a final session that considered a provisional synopsis of the day.

Each of the three topics was introduced with a plenary presentation or panel and followed by a workshop. Workshops were facilitated and each included a rapporteur who produced a summary of the workshop's discussion of key questions:

- What key initiatives are underway?
- What is needed to improve?
- What are the barriers to greater collaboration on this topic?
- What implications might initiatives have at greater scale, would they make a system-level improvement?
- If funding wasn't a constraint, what would you do?
- What is highest priority action to achieve significant progress?

Plenary Presentations and Panels

- A. He Vaka Moana – Dr 'Ema Wolfgram-Foliaki and Dr Hinekura Smith.
- B. Student Panel – Ali Leota (Chair), Tiana Mihaere, Te Māpihi Tutua-Nathan, Ester Bill, James Ranstead, Andrew Itinteang.
- C. Bi-cultural competencies – Professor Catherine Moran, Jamie Hape, Professor Jennifer Brown,

A provisional synopsis of the workshop sessions was presented by the Chair of the Enhancement Theme Steering Group. A final panel session and series of workshops were then asked to respond to this Provisional Synopsis in terms of:

- From your perspective, what are the strengths in this summary?
- Where are the gaps?
- What would the priorities be?

This report draws on the Plenary sessions and facilitated workshops to develop a summary of the Symposium. The Symposium workbook is available [here](#).

The Symposium was chaired by Professor Robyn Longhurst and the day was co-ordinated by Fiona-Johnson-Bell, Te Pouhārō Māori, Universities New Zealand – Te Pōkai Tara.

Hona Black and Malakai Koloamatangi opened the Symposium and Bevan Eruti closed.

We acknowledge the support of Massey University, Pukeahu campus, Wellington in hosting the Symposium and express our considerable thanks to speakers, panel members, workshop facilitators and rapporteurs and participants for their contributions. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.





Access

He Vaka Moana is a University of Auckland initiative based on oceanic principles of shared histories and capabilities in successfully navigating the Pacific Ocean, each charting their own journeys but coming together to share resources and knowledge (pikipiki hama) or to weather storms before unlash and continuing on individual journeys. This acts as a metaphor for how Māori students and Pasifika students navigate university. Journeys are independent, self-determined, and inter-related.

Participants in He Vaka Moana discuss how this approach can permeate to non-Māori and non-Pasifika staff to see potential for improving student success from a place of strength and recognise that this is a collective responsibility. They recognise that there is not one prescribed model or answer to address Māori and Pasifika success, but suggest some key enablers:

- Long-term sustained institutional commitment,
- Strong Māori and Pacific leadership
- Resource to support projects to develop and embed
- A commitment to enacting Māori and Pasifika ways of being

The first set of workshops considered recruitment and transitions from Māori perspectives and Pasifika perspectives. The detailed workshop reports have been distributed to participants and the section below identifies themes across the four workshop themes.



created by Mr Tony Chung, Application Specialist, Centre for Learning & Research in Higher Education (CLear), Faculty of Education & Social Work, University of Auckland.

Some workshop comments reflected the plenary presentation, asking how students were prepared for 'navigating the system', appreciating that there was 'not one answer', and the need to have a more holistic view of success that took into account of 'success as Māori' and 'success as Pasifika'. This was complemented by comments that indicated the need for universities to also take a holistic view of the student and recognise that factors such as travel, family responsibilities and personal issues continue to have influence inside as well as outside the classroom. Similarly, workshops commented that the diversity of students and their different needs, for example domestic Pasifika students and international Pasifika students, also needed to be appreciated.

Continuing the theme of connectedness, workshops commented on the importance of being and staying connected to both whānau and university. They also commented on the need for information for whānau and family and for whānau and family to understand university study and expectations better. It was suggested that a single information source designed specifically for Māori would be valuable. From a Pasifika perspective, it was suggested that the expertise and understanding of the Pasifika community could support enrolment in university, as could current and past students.

The dominant theme to emerge from the first set of workshops was concerned with 'pathway' (as the preferred term), foundation and/or bridging programmes and the challenges that current policy settings posed for these. Pathway programmes were seen as very valuable, including those that provided more discipline-specific pathways. However, their potential was considered to be limited through these programmes being 'stigmatised' and not well supported by the first year 'fees free' policy setting and limitations on universities being able to offer these programmes.





Student Success

The second plenary session was a student panel chaired by Ali Leota. The panel members were, Tiana Mihaere, Te Māpihi Tutua-Nathan, Ester Bill, James Ranstead and Andrew Itinteang. They represented Māori students, Pasifika students from Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia and pākehā. Panel members were asked:

- to share three key things about their journey and experience so far,
- Why they decided to go to university,
- How they have found transitions at various stages,
- One thing that could be better, and
- What was a quote or whakatauki that reflected their experience so far.

Their responses included the importance of spaces and people where they could be Māori or Pasifika and be supported in this. Outside of these spaces, students did face greater challenges including racism from other students, particularly with regard to competitive entry programmes. The students acknowledged that this racism did not start with university but challenged whether more could be done to address it. They also stressed that they should be involved in decision-making that affected students.



The workshop sessions that followed considered ‘student success’. They explored the question of what does success look like and how is cultural identity reflected in success, the importance of cultural understanding and the potential contribution of non-Māori and non-Pasifika staff, support systems and the role that data and analytics can play.

This wider view of success included students graduating happy and thriving and having enjoyed their experience and leaving university with a good sense of who they are. It also raised an issue of how to reconcile success as a individual alongside the collective effort that has contributed to that success. “Māori success is Māori students graduating as Māori” and that success being recognised. Workshops suggested that listening to and working with students could enhance the student voice. They also discussed ‘joining up’ initiatives to take a whole of university approach to student success.

Cultural understanding and competency of non-Māori and non-Pasifika staff is also important and non-Māori staff were encouraged to “step into Māori staff shoes”. Teaching staff need to understand Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Pasifika culture. The standing of teaching as valued activity was also discussed, as was the reflection of Māori and Pasifika world views in curricula.

Discussions on the potential of learning analytics and data also highlighted questions of data sovereignty.





Organisational Change

In the third plenary session Professor Catherine Moran, Jamie Hape and Professor Jennifer Brown discussed how work in support of the University of Canterbury's commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi has become an integral component of the University's graduate profile, with the expectation that all students graduating will be 'biculturally, competent and confident'. They explored how this work has been embedded in organisational change, particularly around curriculum.

As with the earlier workshop sessions, many current initiatives were identified. One workshop session cautioned that there was a need to reduce duplication and "look at what really works". Common themes in the organisational change initiatives included:

- Curriculum initiatives,
- Student support and changes in student support systems,
- The development of leadership roles,
- Separate approaches for Māori students and staff and Pasifika students and staff, and
- Taking opportunities for change, although other comments included caution about the effect that change could have on students.

In response to the question 'what is needed to improve', workshop comments included:

- the importance of culturally appropriate space,
- effective student consultation,
- the need for staff to have cultural and Te Tiriti o Waitangi understanding,
- the need to address institutional racism,
- leadership from external entities such as the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and also internally from senior leadership and through academic committees, and
- 'normalising' these discussions and practices.

A barrier to greater collaboration identified by the Pasifika perspective workshop was the availability, capacity and ability to develop Pasifika staff, noting that these staff tended to be relatively junior and on temporary contracts. Staff recruitment and retention and how staff were valued were also seen as both challenges and priorities to address in Māori perspective workshops.

Workshop comments regarding implications for scale included a need for co-governance of initiatives, sharing of good practice, student visibility, ensuring outcomes are fed-back and showing impact of first stages of projects to support scaling.





Provisional Synopsis

The three workshop sessions were summarised into a provisional synopsis of the day, which was presented by Professor Robyn Longhurst, Chair of the Enhancement Theme Steering Group.



Access, pathways, transitions

- Dedicated strategies
- Involve whānau and family
 - Relationship oriented, meaningful relationships
- Single source of 'unbiased' information
 - Accessible to whānau
- Foundation courses
 - Valuable, but potentially 'stigmatising'
- Fees free
 - Opportunity and challenge
 - Should fees free be used for bridging
- Compulsory sector
- Cultural lens for solutions and initiatives

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Student success

- What does success look like
 - Māori students graduating as Māori
 - Thriving, healthy students who enjoy their university experience
- Taking opportunities for (disruptive) change
- Non-Māori staff supporting Māori students and staff
- Importance of cultural competencies
- Use of learning analytics
 - Are we measuring the right things
 - Collective success vs independent learners
- Teaching quality and teaching 'mana'
- Whole of university approach

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Organisational change

- Dedicated leadership roles
 - Start from the top
- Visibility of plans
- Challenges of silos, need for resources
- Need for more Māori staff and Pasifika staff
 - And professional development
- Put students at the front of change
 - Ensure student engagement is visible
- Curriculum focus
- Need for buy-in, sharing and embedding of practices
- One-size doesn't fit all

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Final Panel and Workshops

A final panel session and series of workshops were then asked to respond to the Provisional Synopsis in terms of:

- From your perspective, what are the strengths in this summary?
- Where are the gaps?
- What would the priorities be?

The panel was chaired by Professor Robyn Longhurst and the panel members were:

- Derek McCormack, Vice-Chancellor, AUT,
- Dr Charlotte Severne, AVC Māori and Pasifika, Massey University / Te Kāhui Amokura,
- Professor Giselle Byrnes, Provost, Massey University / Enhancement Theme Steering Group,
- Associate Professor Damon Salesa, Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific, University of Auckland, and
- Mamaeroa Merito - Te Mana Ākonga.



Panel members indicated that the synopsis reflected strengths with respect to student engagement, highlighting the mana of teaching, that the benefits of engaging with whānau would apply to all students. Students and teaching are important from both commercial and moral perspectives. The Panel acknowledged the contribution of workshops in talking honestly about challenges and recognising that improving access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and Pasifika students was not only a matter for Māori staff and Pasifika staff. There is a need for all-of-university collective responsibility and rejection of deficit thinking to improve opportunities and success for Māori students and Pasifika students.

In terms of gaps, Panel members asked whether socio-economic status (SES) had been discussed, as opposed to ethnicity and diversity. They further commented that there were many reasons why universities should be adopting cultural approaches – which were not solely concerned with gaps in student success but reflected universities in Aotearoa. Questions from the floor explored challenges in separating SES and culture and agreed that SES was highly relevant. Building on this, Panel members suggested that universities could also target lower SES students and not all chase academically well-performing, middle-class Māori students and Pasifika students. One panel member drew an analogy with the talent spotting and development model of New Zealand Rugby which was considered more likely to identify and nurture a talented junior rugby player from a low income household where the student moved schools frequently. This was consistent with a comment that considered NZ universities to take an exclusionary approach, rather than seeking to provide pathways for students.





The need to be less competitive about pathway programmes in particular and build trust that students from one pathway programme will be well looked after at another university was also discussed. Universities could invest in each others' success. 'Walking in others' shoes' was suggested as a way to build both trust and deeper understanding of initiatives.

Recognising the importance of relationships with whānau is also important. Whānau can exert both positive and negative pressures on tauira in terms of expectations to succeed. However, academic expectations are not the only expectations that whānau may have with tauira also expected to contribute to tangi and other events. Universities also need to appreciate these expectations.

A further gap was talking about failure and how to walk away from initiatives that were not working. Panel members also sounded a cautionary note that ceasing initiatives could have negative impacts on already vulnerable staff who may be unable to transition into a more promising initiative.

Panel members suggested the compulsory sector was not reflected in the summary, but that the challenges of the compulsory sector should not be used as a reason for universities failing to address this issue. In conjunction with this, there was also a opportunity to seek to shape government thinking with one Education Minister with responsibility for all parts of the education system.

A final gap was what would happen next following the Symposium. How can the relationships from the Symposium be used to initiate change and grow the numbers of Māori students and Pasifika students who can achieve at university. The pace of change was raised as a challenge with well-designed research to inform evidence-based decisions taking time. Could other approaches, possibly such as 'design-thinking' be used to effect change while research continues. Associated with this was a call for research that is relevant for Māori communities and Pasifika communities to be appropriately disseminated to increase the relevance of university to these communities.

The question of priorities for progress overlapped with the two previous questions. However, the following were suggested as priorities:

- Finding ways to cease what wasn't working. Panel members reminded the group that this Symposium was only being held as current approaches were not working to the extent they needed to be.
- Taking opportunities to learn from one another at detailed levels. This would involve spending time at other institutions and drilling into success factors.
- Taking the opportunity to contribute to government thinking.

The final workshop sessions of the day addressed the same questions as the Panel and their comments reflected many of the same themes. Whānau involvements and relationships were seen as vital, as was the need to strengthen engagement with families and communities. Applying a cultural lens to curriculum to allow meaningful design was seen as important as was collaboration on a range of scales and keeping students at the centre of thinking.

Other gaps that were explored included mature students and not solely focussing on school leavers, recognising that students might be ashamed to ask for help and providing whānau-centric information. From a Pasifika perspective it was suggested that universities could change the ways in which they engage with both communities and the compulsory sector. From an organisational change perspective it was suggested that there was a need to unpack why some areas did not have Māori staff or Pasifika staff. Staff retention was also highlighted.

Other advice included engaging with the compulsory sector, highlighting good practice, ensuring the student voice is supported and listened to. A final key point was "where to from here"?







Conclusions and Next Steps

This is the first time that a group comprising members of university senior leadership teams, academics, professional staff who support Māori students and development, professional staff who support Pasifika students and development, quality managers and students has been brought together to focus on “access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and Pasifika students”. Participants found the sharing of initiatives and multiplicity of perspectives to be valuable, together with networking opportunities and incorporation of the student voice. They also valued the creation of a universities-only space for discussion. Discussion with the wider sector remains important, but at times there seems to be value in having a universities discussion. This approach may also be useful for other cross-university initiatives.

The majority of the comment from the workshops related to sharing current practice and ideas for improvement. These were:

- Pathway programmes are valuable and need to be ‘destigmatised’.
- Student Success is success “as Māori” and “as Pasifika” and is broader than academic success with successful students thriving, being happy and confident in their culture(s) and identity.
- Student voice is fundamental and valuable and needs to be part of initiatives and decision-making.
- Curriculum is a key tool for change and space is an enabler of support and belonging.
- Cultural capability needs to be built for an ‘all-of-university’ contribution to student success.
- Failures as well as successes need to be examined.

There was relatively little comment about how initiatives might operate at scale. This could be due to a lack of time in the session or because this question required greater access to evidence than could be achieved in this Symposium.

Although the Symposium emphasised sharing of practice and there was evidence this occurred, there is a danger that it becomes another commentary on the current state rather than engendering positive change. While there is value in these sorts of Symposia, they should contribute to positive change. Universities have much to learn from one another, but there is no single ‘10-step plan for success’.

The involvement and contribution of non-Māori to success for Māori students needs to be discussed further. While the invitation to contribute is there, as is the acknowledgement that success for Māori students is a collective responsibility, questions around governance of initiatives and capability to contribute remain.

Next steps

One of the objectives set out in the frameworks for the enhancement theme is to “Be explicit and transparent about how NZ universities are working together to progress parity in access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori learners and for Pasifika learners”. Releasing this report and other workshop materials contributes to that objective.

Each university will determine for itself how it could use the experience and report from the Symposium. Some matters discussed in the Symposium are current topics in other fora (particularly the Te Kāhui Amokura and Komiti Pasifika workplans and Universities New Zealand work on ‘Achieving Parity’). The Enhancement Theme Steering Group, Te Kāhui Amokura and Komiti Pasifika will consider how to progress ideas suggested in the Symposium.

