

Cycle 6 Academic audit of Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington Executive summary

Academic audits are part of the external quality assurance arrangements for universities in Aotearoa New Zealand. They are the only external quality assurance process that takes a whole-of-institution view of a university's teaching, learning, student support and student outcomes. Audits are undertaken by a panel of peers comprising senior academics or academic managers in Aotearoa New Zealand, a Māori panel member, a Pacific panel member (where possible), an international panel member and a student or recent graduate.

Universities in Aotearoa New Zealand are currently engaged in their sixth cycle of academic audit. Cycle 6 is a composite audit with two main phases. In the first phase, from 2017 – 2020, universities engaged in an enhancement theme focusing on access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pacific students. Further information is available on the enhancement themes website.¹

The second phase of Cycle 6 is an audit against a framework of 30 guideline statements in five sections: (1) Leadership and management of teaching and learning, and academic quality; (2) Student life cycle, support and wellbeing; (3) Curriculum, assessment and delivery; (4) Teaching quality; and (5) Supervision of postgraduate research students. Universities undertake a self-assessment against the audit framework and present a self-review report and portfolio of supporting evidence. The university's self-review should also reflect the university's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the interdependence of university research and teaching, and universities' role as critic and conscience of society. Its assessment should encompass all students, all delivery and all staff who undertake or support teaching or supervision.

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington submitted its self-review portfolio on 23 May 2022 and provided further information requested by the Panel in August 2022. The Panel found the self-review to be comprehensive and well-supported by evidence. The Panel met twice (online) before undertaking an in-person site visit to the University from 12-14 September 2022. During the site visit, the Panel held 22 interview sessions and met with 78 members of staff and 35 students. Information gained through the interviews supplements that contained in the self-review portfolio and the Panel draws on both sources to reach its findings.

The Cycle 6 Academic Audit of Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington took place in the context of the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, a substantial programme of work renewing the digital infrastructure for teaching and learning plus other major teaching and learning

¹ <https://www.enhanceunz.com/>

projects, and an acting Vice-Chancellor leading the University. COVID-19 has accelerated shifts in teaching, learning, assessment and ways of working in partnership with students that were already underway. The Panel considers the University had appropriate governance and management of the interdependencies between major projects and acknowledges that it had taken steps to reduce the load on staff by deferring or slowing some projects. Contextual factors have influenced the Panel's findings in the pattern of commendations, affirmations and recommendations it has made.

The University undertook (and continues to undertake) significant work to maintain teaching, learning and support for students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Panel commends the work of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) in supporting this response. Dedicated services were instrumental in supporting Māori students and Pasifika students during the pandemic and the Panel commends the establishment of Āwhina and the Pasifika Student Success Team (PSST) and the ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of these services. It recommends the University address remaining recommendations from the post-implementation monitoring report of the PSST. The Panel also recommends the University develop post-implementation plans for all teaching, learning, assessment and supervision initiatives. As changes accelerated by COVID-19 will be ongoing, the Panel suggests the University draw on this experience in its plans for learning support.

The Panel has made several commendations, affirmations and recommendations related to the University's renewal programme for its digital teaching and learning infrastructure. The programme includes a new Learning Management System (LMS), a Curriculum Management System (CMS) and a Student Relationship Management System (SRM). The Panel affirms work underway to create an enhanced teaching and learning environment and the model for supporting staff as the new LMS is implemented. CAD is commended for its leadership role in the change programme for learning and teaching infrastructure.

Investment in data capability to inform teaching and learning, performance monitoring and support for students is a component of the University's renewal of its digital teaching and learning infrastructure. The Panel affirms this direction and suggests the University support capability building for staff to make best use of this data, including its use for ongoing improvement. Use of data includes monitoring utilisation trends and evaluating the efficacy of service provision for student cohort access to various forms of learning support.

Other teaching, learning and support initiatives underway or planned include a Curriculum Framework project, a Graduate Profile project, an assessment framework, a holistic advising model and a Wellbeing Outcomes Framework. The Panel affirms the direction of these initiatives and ongoing initiatives to enhance access, outcomes and opportunities for Pasifika students. In terms of the Curriculum Framework and Graduate Profile projects, the Panel considers there are opportunities to embed support for transitions, employability, learning support and academic skills development in these projects and makes recommendations for the University to consider. The Panel commends VicTeach for its support for innovative and good practice teaching and learning.

The Panel affirms the University's intention to review access pathways for Māori students, Pasifika students and student groups the University focuses on in its Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Framework. It also recommends the University give greater strategic focus to attracting Māori students and Pasifika students to postgraduate, particularly doctoral, study. The Panel also recommends the University complete its review of ongoing training for postgraduate supervisors and ensure that responsibilities for monitoring training and progress reporting are clear and enforced.

The University identified an enhancement initiative to develop an academic quality framework. The Panel supports this initiative and recommends that it include maintaining currency of academic policies. Also associated with academic policy and quality, the Panel recommends that the University urgently progress its review of the Academic Grievance Policy and complete the operationalisation of its new academic integrity policy. The Panel recommends the University consider whether the composition of its programme review panels provides sufficient breadth of perspectives in reaching evaluative conclusions. Finally with respect to academic quality, the Panel commends the Academic Approvals and the Programme and Course Design handbooks that provide useful guidance for staff in developing programmes and assessment.

The University has undertaken significant pieces of work in a self-audit against its Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute and in the development of a Ngā Kīwai o te Kete – Student Engagement Framework. The Panel commends the University for its Te Tiriti o Waitangi Handbook and Te Tiriti o Waitangi audit and affirms the University's implementation plan for recommendations from the Te Tiriti o Waitangi audit. The Panel also affirms the development of the Ngā Kīwai o te Kete – Student Engagement Framework and annual Student Agreement and encourages the University to keep progressing its work on building productive partnerships with students. A further enhancement initiative identified by the University to develop the Fale Malae is also affirmed by the Panel. The Fale Malae is intended to increase the engagement with Pasifika communities, students and schools.

On the basis of the evidence available to it at the time of the audit, the Panel considers the University meets the expectations of the Cycle 6 Academic Audit Framework. In several instances the University exceeds the outcomes and standards a university of good international standing would be expected to demonstrate. Where it considers further work is required, the Panel has made recommendations or affirmed enhancement initiatives already identified by the University. The Panel has made seven commendations, eleven affirmations and twelve recommendations that support and encourage good practices and are intended to assist the University as it progresses its own strategic direction.

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington should provide a follow-up report one year after the release of this report. The follow-up report should address progress on both affirmations and recommendations. Once it has been accepted by the AQA Board, the follow-up report should be made publicly available.

Further information about academic audits, including previous audit reports, is available on the AQA website.²

² www.aqa.ac.nz