

Report of the 2015 Academic Audit of the Auckland University of Technology Executive Summary

Established in 2000, the Auckland University of Technology operates from a campus in central Auckland City, with campuses elsewhere in Auckland: the South Campus (Manukau), the North Campus (Akoranga North Shore) and the AUT Millennium (an institute for Sport and Health at Albany). The Auckland University of Technology also has a small site dedicated to refugee education at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre in South Auckland.

In 2014 the University had a total enrolment of 28,314 students (19,582 EFTS) and 2,204 full-time equivalent staff. Overall, the Auckland University of Technology's academic offerings span a wide range of programmes from pre-degree to doctoral level.

The University was audited by the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) in 2015. The 2015 audit follows the methodology used for all New Zealand universities in the fifth cycle of academic audits. It focuses on teaching and learning and student support, including postgraduate. The AQA audit methodology incorporates a framework of 40 Guideline Statements which articulate the qualities or standards which a contemporary university of good international standing might be expected to demonstrate.

Prior to 2015, the Auckland University of Technology was most recently audited by AQA (as the then New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit) in 2011. The University provided an update against the findings of that audit and the Panel is satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to address the 2011 recommendations.

From the Panel's assessment, the Auckland University of Technology is characterised by a philosophy which is widely understood by staff and is directly translated into practice. In particular, it is collegial, inclusive, focused on providing opportunity and is genuinely centred on teaching, learning and student engagement. The Panel found many examples of activity and approaches to decision-making which reflected a respect for diversity and a desire to be responsive to variations in need by discipline, location or learning and teaching practices.

A risk management issue emanating from the above approach, identified by the Panel, is a need to ensure that coherence and consistency are not compromised for activities which are institution-wide, but possibly administered at school or campus level. With respect to this risk, the Panel has recommended that the University review its processes for providing academic advice by faculty; for communicating processes for managing academic appeals and grievances; for ensuring induction of new staff is appropriate; and for coordinating the professional development and sharing of good practice for teachers.

The Panel was impressed by the extent to which activity at the Auckland University of Technology across a wide spectrum of areas is evidence-based and data-driven. Adoption of a series of dashboards and the School Scorecard enables staff at all levels to access data appropriate to their

areas of responsibility, from individual course evaluation to aggregate data on such topics as student achievement by specific socio-cultural group. Use of data to inform planning and decision-making was evident.

The University has received several commendations which reflect its core focus on student learning and student engagement. The Panel has commended its systematic, internationally benchmarked approach to learning space design; the success of its commitment to work-integrated learning; its comprehensive and coordinated approach to addressing education about and management of academic integrity; its proactive and evidence-based approaches to enhancing student engagement; and its initiatives in meeting the technological needs of students. The Panel affirms the University's introduction of an institutional graduate profile and its participation in international benchmarking initiatives related to assessment and learning outcomes.

The University is urged to develop its risk management portfolio to identify risk events which might impede teaching, learning, research and associated academic activities over an extended period and to ensure that plans and procedures are in place to expedite business continuity in the event of such a disruption.

The Auckland University of Technology promotes opportunity, inclusiveness and equity in ways which the Panel assessed as commendable. In addition to the range of support services provided for Māori, Pasifika, disabled and international students, the University specifically identifies and provides for the obligations of Māori and Pasifika staff within its workload models; its marae is widely used by staff and students of any identity; it has a Chinese Centre and an Arabic-speaking academic adviser; the new South Campus at Manukau and University transport provision to the City Campus has enabled increased numbers of Māori and Pasifika students to attend university; and targeted Vice-Chancellor's Doctoral Scholarships encourage high-achieving Māori and Pasifika students to embark on an academic career. The Auckland University of Technology is also a recipient of the national "Rainbow Tick" for supporting LGBTI people.¹

The University has very good processes and procedures for management of postgraduate research, from admission to final examination and has good support for postgraduate students. It has robust processes in place to ensure that postgraduate research students are supervised by staff who are well prepared through supervisory training, monitoring, mentoring and workload management and by careful appointment of supervision teams. However, while acknowledging that significant progress had been made since the Cycle 4 audit, the Cycle 5 Panel nevertheless reiterated the Cycle 4 audit concerns about the need to develop the research capacity of staff. In particular, the Cycle 5 Panel assessed the unevenness of research experience as potentially resulting in uneven supervision workloads, which is undesirable for staff and also could potentially constrain supervision access for students.

¹ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.

The University identified 13 enhancements, a number of which the Panel specifically endorsed. A number of major developments in progress were also noted. The audit Panel has made 11 commendations, 3 affirmations and 6 recommendations.

The full report is available from the AQA website: www.aqa.ac.nz

Contact: director@aqac.ac.nz or phone (04) 801 7925

Website: www.aqa.ac.nz

Date of release: 18 April 2016