

Report of a Review of Teacher Education Programmes

Fiji National University

Review undertaken by the Academic Quality
Agency for New Zealand Universities

April 2020

*Te Pokapū Kōunga Mātauranga
mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa*



Academic
QualityAgency
For New Zealand Universities



Report of a Review of Teacher Education Programmes

Fiji National University

April 2020

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Executive Summary

In 2019 Fiji National University (FNU) invited the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) to undertake a review of teacher education programmes in the School of Education (the School). The overall objectives of the review were to assess:

- whether the programmes meet the standards expected of Bachelor of Education degrees internationally
- whether programmes deliver on its claimed graduate attributes (learning outcomes)
- whether programmes meet professional and/or employer expectations.

Overall, the Panel acknowledges the considerable progress that has been made in the past 10 years since the establishment of FNU. The School of Education at FNU is delivering teacher education programmes that are responding to Fiji national priorities for education and is committed to supporting student progress. The Panel has commended the University and School of Education for a number of its practices and made recommendations in areas that it considers will assist the School and University in delivering teacher education programmes of an international standard.

The conclusions reached by the Panel are summarised below. Numbers in parentheses refer to paragraph numbers in the text of the report.

Commendations and Affirmations of Good Practice:

The Panel commends:

1. The openness and commitment to quality assurance by the University and all those the Panel spoke with. (Introduction)
2. The innovative and valuable nature of the Higher Certificate in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. (1.16)
3. The development of good practice assessment guidelines for staff. (3.2)
4. The provision of support for students through the English and maths hubs and the attention of lecturing staff to student progress. (4.4)
5. Staff commitment to supporting both student learning and extra-curricula activities including through community engagement. (4.7)
6. The support for staff to complete postgraduate qualifications. (6.2)

The Panel affirms the following work that is underway:

1. Documenting processes and expectations in the form of the draft Quality Assurance manual which will support ongoing quality assurance. (1.3)
2. The development of Early Alert Response System (EARS) and its direct engagement with teaching staff seems to be a positive development. (4.3)

Recommendations for programme enhancement:

The Panel makes the following recommendations:

1. That the School and University pay attention to how policies and processes related to curriculum quality are operationalised and implemented. (1.4)

2. That the School and University consider how they might improve the ongoing shared ownership by staff, students and external stakeholders of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning. (1.5)
3. Further develop the previously initiated work to ensure alignment between the University graduate attributes (institutional learning outcomes), programme graduate attributes (programme learning outcomes), course learning outcomes and assessment. (1.11)
4. Further alignment work should include disciplinary-specific content courses, working with the relevant academic staff. (1.12)
5. Urgently, revisit practicum requirements, including the length of the practicum and scheduling, particularly for the second practicum where there is an apparent time clash with school exams. (2.4)
6. Ensure that the practicum expectations and assessment template have been updated to reflect the new practicum arrangements. (2.4)
7. Consider international practice in assessing the practicum with a particular focus on progression and the level of professional reflexive practice being assessed. (2.4)
8. Review the operationalisation of institutional processes and expectations for collecting and disseminating analysis of course evaluations in a timely manner to enable course renewal and enhance programme quality. (2.5)
9. Summaries of course evaluations from previous students on a course should be made available to current students. (2.5)
10. Review the assessment load – for students and staff - across courses within programmes and, in doing so, examine the number of pieces of assessment and types of assessment to ensure they align with course learning outcomes. (3.1)
11. Review the effectiveness of processes for making students aware of complaints and grievance policies and practices. (4.8)
12. Review the effectiveness of student voice, including student membership of committees, support for students to contribute to committees and other mechanisms such as student representatives in courses. (4.9)
13. That priorities for resourcing are developed in consultation and shared with staff. (5.3)
14. Urgently address the volume of intellectual leadership resource available to the School. (5.5)
15. Develop opportunities for systematic learning by groups of staff on topics related to enhancing programme quality and student experience, especially relating to contemporary learning and teaching methods and the use of ICT. (6.4)
16. Consider extending the graduate feedback survey further so that it captures perspectives on the attainment of graduate attributes and competencies. (7.3)
17. Consider supplementing the extension of the graduate destination survey with an employer survey so that an evidence base of what is professionally valued can be used to inform discussions with external stakeholders and ongoing enhancement of the programmes. (7.6)
18. Strengthen the relationship with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts and other key external stakeholders. (7.8)

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Preface

In 2019 Fiji National University (FNU) invited the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) to undertake a review of teacher education programmes in the School of Education (the School), College of Humanities and Education. The overall objectives of the review were to assess:

- whether the programme meets the standards expected of a Bachelor of Education degree internationally,
- whether it delivers on its claimed graduate attributes (learning outcomes), and
- whether it meets professional and/or employer expectations.

The AQA and FNU determined the quality assurance principles upon which the review would be based. The review framework is articulated as a set of guidelines that align with those which AQA applies to New Zealand universities and are considered by AQA to represent standards of international good practice. The guidelines provided the basis for the Self-review Report and the site visit. They also provide the framework for this Review Report.

The AQA received a Self-review report and supporting documents from FNU in December 2019 and arrangements for the site visit were made during January 2020. The site visit by a panel including three reviewers took place from 11 to 13 February 2020.

The Panel for the review was:

Professor Lindsey Conner (Flinders University)
Adjunct Professor David Crabbe (Panel Chair) (Victoria University of Wellington)
Dr Tanya Wendt Samu (The University of Auckland)
Emeritus Professor Sheelagh Matear (AQA Secretariat)

During the site visit the Panel met with 66 people including the Vice-Chancellor of FNU, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, the Dean of the Faculty, The Head of the School, the Heads of Programmes, academic and professional staff, external stakeholders including the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA), employers, and currently enrolled students. Due to the multi-campus nature of the University, a number of meetings were conducted via Zoom.

Introduction

Fiji National University (FNU) was created in 2010, from the merger of six Government tertiary colleges, including two former national teacher training colleges. FNU is the national university of Fiji and under the Fiji National University Decree (2009) has self-approving status.¹ FNU has a student population of around 20,000 students², or just over 12,000 EFTS³. It is headquartered in Nasinu (near Suva), has five Colleges, plus the National Training and Productivity Centre⁴, and operates across thirteen campuses and centres.⁵

Teacher education programmes are delivered by the School of Education, which is part of the College of Humanities and Education and is based at the Lautoka (sometimes also referred to as Natabua) campus of FNU. The Dean of the College and Associate Dean are based on the Nasinu campus and travel to Lautoka frequently.

Education is important to Fiji and the Pacific region. Fiji has a young population with 50% of the population under the age of 28 years old. Twenty-five per cent of the national budget is allocated to education.⁶ Teacher education is not only important to Fiji's economic and social development, there is also a shortage of appropriately qualified teachers. The Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA) and a number of its associated bodies take a direct and active interest in and play a role in teacher education programmes.

This is the first major external review of teacher education programmes at FNU. It was initiated as part of an overall university strategic commitment to external quality assurance.⁷ The panel **commends** the University for its openness and commitment to quality assurance. The University's self-review was led by the Dean of the College of Humanities and Education.

University vision, mission and strategic priorities

The College of Humanities and Education and the School, of Education operate within the strategic plan and priorities for FNU. FNU's vision is "to be recognised as a key driver of Fiji's economic prosperity" and its mission is stated as being "to support the economic and social development of Fiji through relevant, high-quality education and training that maximises graduate employability and applied research that has positive social impact".⁸ FNU has indicated that it intends to focus on access to education, (including through the use of flexible and e-learning), quality, and excellence as strategic priorities over the next 10 years.⁹

¹ Section 6-1, Fiji National University Decree (2009).

² SR. p13.

³ SR. p14.

⁴ FNU Organisational Structure (CHESR 1-1-7)

⁵ SR. p13.

⁶ SR. p5.

⁷ SR. p9.

⁸ Strategic Plan 2020-25: Update for discussion (CHESR 1-1-3-2)

⁹ SR. p16.

School and Programmes

The School of Education has approval to deliver programmes (qualifications) from sub-degree level to postgraduate research degrees. The teacher education programmes included in the review are:

- Bachelor of Education (Primary)
- Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
- Graduate Certificate in Education
- Higher Education Certificate Teaching in Technical and Vocational Education and Training
- Postgraduate Diploma in Education.

The School of Education has also introduced an Early Childcare Education (ECE) programme and has approval for Master's degrees. The recommendations in this report are also relevant for those programmes and qualifications.

The Self-review focused on the period 2017-2019. The programmes moved from a trimester to a semester delivery model in 2018. This has had some implications for programme delivery, particularly the professional practicum requirements for the Bachelor of Education degrees. This is discussed further in section 2.4.

Both Bachelor of Education degrees are three-year programmes. The BEd (Primary) caters to both new teachers (initial teacher education) and current teachers who have qualified with a sub-degree level of training. The BEd (Secondary) has seventeen disciplinary content major subjects. The major subject combinations are prescribed by MEHA and the disciplinary content is delivered by other departments. The BEd (Primary) and BEd (Secondary) provide the majority of enrolments (91%)¹⁰ and graduates (93%)¹¹ in the School of Education.

Teacher education programmes are based at the Lautoka campus (with the School). The first year of the BEd (Primary) is also available on the Nasinu and Labasa campuses. BEd (Secondary) programmes are mainly based on the Lautoka campus, apart from Agricultural Science and Industrial Arts which are based at campuses near Nasinu.¹²

The Self-review lists 39 academic staff in the School of Education. This includes one Professor and one Assistant Professor. Most staff are at Lecturer level.¹³

¹⁰ Calculated from SR. p37.

¹¹ Calculated from SR. p17.

¹² <https://programmes.fnu.ac.fj/Details.aspx?id=1181> accessed 20200228

¹³ SR. p43.

1. Curriculum and programme development

Guideline: Curriculum and programme development.

The development, content and delivery of the programme should be internationally comparable, academically sustainable and acceptable to stakeholders, including both students and employers.

- 1.1 The Panel took time to appreciate the context in which the University and its teacher education programmes operate. It recognised the need for the programmes to meet national (Fiji) and regional (Pacific) requirements and to ensure their international standing. The Panel appreciated the complexities associated with being a multi-campus university and having multiple stakeholder groups with a range of roles that impact on curriculum design and graduate acceptability.
- 1.2 In addition to aligning with University expectation and requirements, education programmes are also expected to contribute to achievement of the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Art (MEHA)'s objectives for education in "nation building, empowerment and enhancement in quality of life". Associated educational agencies - the Fiji Education Commission (FHEC) and Fiji Teachers' Registration Authority (FTRA) also have a stake in the curriculum and the expected attributes of graduates. FHEC has a role in formally approving curricula and in recording qualifications on the Fiji Qualifications Framework. National principals' and head teachers' associations are additional stakeholders in determining desirable graduate attributes.
- 1.3 The Self-review documentation provided evidence of a clear system of academic oversight of curriculum development and approval. The Panel anticipates that the University work already underway in the development of a comprehensive quality assurance manual would make a positive contribution to the design and management of academic programmes and **affirms** this work in progress.
- 1.4 However, the Panel cautions that there is a need to actively check that policies and processes are operating in practice as they are intended to operate. The Panel was not convinced that processes for input to curriculum development and renewal were effectively and consistently implemented in practice. There is a need for regular meetings and communication among staff to ensure aspects of programme quality receive continuous attention. The Panel **recommends** that the School and University pay attention to how policies and processes related to curriculum quality are operationalised and implemented.
- 1.5 The Curriculum Advisory Services (CAS) section of MEHA develops the national curricula for early childhood, primary and secondary schools. Teacher education programmes need to remain aligned with school curricula. The Panel saw evidence that (CAS) has 'signed off' on teacher education programmes. They also heard however that information about changes to the school curriculum were not passed onto the School as quickly or clearly as desired. The Panel **recommends** that the School and University consider how they might improve the ongoing shared ownership by staff, students and external stakeholders of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning. This could

include regular, but not necessarily frequent, meetings with external stakeholders to seek feedback on the curriculum and the graduate attributes that it serves.

- 1.6 Although FNU is a self-accrediting institution and FHEC are obviously well aware of the Bachelor of Education (Primary) and the Bachelor of Education (Secondary), the Panel was unable to find evidence of these qualifications being recorded (listed) on the Fiji National Qualifications Framework.¹⁴ It suggests this is a matter that the University seeks to resolve so that publicly available information about the programmes is consistent and reflects their accreditation status.
- 1.7 The Panel considered that the programme structures for the qualifications were similar to those found in initial teacher education programmes internationally. Although there are three year primary teacher education B.Ed degrees to be found elsewhere, the international norm for secondary teacher education programmes, and increasingly for primary programmes, is towards an undergraduate degree followed by a postgraduate teaching qualification. However, the Panel also appreciated that the level of demand for appropriately qualified teachers in Fiji is high and that these current arrangements have been designed to meet local needs. To fully meet international standards, the inclusion of more disciplinary content (which would require a fourth year) should be seriously considered.
- 1.8 MEHA provide direction on the priorities for subject specialisations in secondary schools. Overall, enrolment levels and trends indicate that the programmes are likely to be sustainable. However, there is wide variation in enrolment levels in the different major subjects in the BEd (Secondary). Very few students have enrolled in Maths and Information Science and Physics and Computer Science majors, although more have enrolled in Maths and Computer Science and Maths and Physics. The School and University may wish to discuss the number of major subjects offered and their configuration with MEHA.
- 1.9 The Panel heard no evidence to suggest that entry requirements were not clear to students. It did hear comments from some external stakeholders that they considered some non-academic criteria might be taken into account in admitting students to the programmes. They also heard comment about a potential need to limit enrolments due to space and staffing limitations. Given the national priority placed on education, it would be cautious about limiting enrolment. The experience of other universities has been limited entry can send perverse signals and reduce diversity of the student cohort, as well as being difficult to manage.
- 1.10 Minimum entry requirements to university study are set by MEHA, including English language and numeracy requirements. However, entry requirements for specific programmes are approved by the University Senate.¹⁵ The Panel heard that recent changes requiring a higher level to the numeracy entry requirement for the BEd (Primary) had had an unanticipated impact on programme enrolments. Students had not enrolled in the BEd (Primary) but had enrolled in the BEd (Secondary). This is likely to have future consequences.

¹⁴ <https://www.fhec.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FQF-Accredited-Qualifications.pdf> accessed 20200225

¹⁵ CHESR 1-1-8

With respect to entry pathways, the Panel noted that greater flexibility in entry pathways into secondary education teaching may be found internationally, where it is easier, for example, to switch from primary to secondary programmes and to have more flexibility in the combination of subjects.

- 1.11 The Panel heard that work had been initiated to ensure alignment between the University graduate attributes (institutional learning outcomes), programme graduate attributes (programme learning outcomes), course learning outcomes and assessment. It considers that this earlier alignment initiative was positive and **recommends** that it be developed further.

In progressing this work further, the Panel suggests the School pay attention to the number of learning outcomes in courses. Some education courses cover a number of ‘big topics’ which will require further unpacking, time for reflection, and discussion. Where there are a relatively high number of learning outcomes and assessment topics, although there are connections between learning outcomes, course content and assessment, it is difficult to see how these can lead to deeper learning and engagement.

- 1.12 The discipline-specific content on the BEd (Secondary) in its major subjects is an important component of the overall curriculum. The Panel **recommends** that the further alignment work include disciplinary-specific content courses, working with the relevant academic staff. The Panel did not find evidence that discipline-specific content was contextualised for education students, despite in some cases education students comprising the majority of the enrolments in courses. Greater collaboration and alignment could also allow reduction of assessment (see Section 3). As this alignment between education courses and discipline-specific course content develops further, there may be opportunities to further contextualise some of the discipline-specific content for education in Fiji and potentially develop ‘pedagogical content’ courses.

With respect to the relationship between education and discipline-specific content courses, the Panel heard the discipline-specific content courses being referred to as ‘service’ courses or ‘service’ teaching. There were no negative comments about the discipline-specific courses or their contribution to education programmes, but the term does not recognise the importance of the disciplinary content to the the BEd (Secondary) curriculum. Given the opportunities that could arise from greater collaboration and alignment, the Panel suggests that terms such as ‘discipline-specific’ or ‘teaching-subject’ courses would be preferable.

- 1.13 Future alignment work may also need to take new Fiji teaching standards into account. The Panel hopes that there may be the opportunity for staff to work collaboratively on these standards with the relevant government stakeholders in order to contextualise them to teaching in Fijian schools and centres.
- 1.14 The major pathway into teacher education programmes is directly from high school. However, there are also a significant number of in-service teachers who are also studying to gain teaching qualifications. In either case, once enrolled in either the B.Ed. (Primary) or B.Ed. (Secondary), the

options for transferring between programmes appear limited and not particularly encouraged. The programme could consider whether flexibility of this sort could be feasible and desirable.

1.15 More broadly, the Panel considers that the School is at a point where it would find value in examining opportunities for benchmarking programme design and outcomes. It appreciates that benchmarking is a substantial undertaking and suggests that lower cost options, such as online peer review¹⁶, could be explored.

1.16 Much of the above comment focusses on the Bachelor's degree programmes. The Panel also met with students and staff from the Higher Education Certificate Teaching in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (HECTTVET). It appreciated the enthusiasm of these students, their ability to articulate the benefits of the programme and its clear relevance in meeting industry needs. The Panel **commends** the HECTTVET qualification as an innovative and valuable programme.

¹⁶ See, for example, <https://www.peerreviewportal.com/> Accessed 20200226

2. Teaching quality, including work experience

Guideline: Teaching, including work experience opportunities.

Teaching methods should be appropriate to the curriculum level of study and intended learning outcomes. Internships or workplace experience should be appropriate.

2.1 Teacher education programmes are mainly taught in face-to-face classes although the use of flexible delivery and e-learning is increasing. The University has invested in digital infrastructure to help address its access priorities.

2.2 The Panel did not gain a strong sense of a guiding teaching philosophy or common, shared, pedagogical principles, although it did hear that social constructivism was a widely used and appropriate approach for teacher education in Fiji. The Panel also heard that the School and University were seeking to ensure that teaching was consistent with 'twenty-first century' practices but did not gain much specificity beyond an increase in flexible and e-learning teaching methods.

Given the stated commitment to social constructivism as an approach to learning, there is an opportunity to promote innovation in the Fijian school system through modelling good practice in the teacher education programmes. The Panel did hear evidence of a range of teaching methods being used, including the use of group work and other collaborative activities, field trips and micro-teaching opportunities. Students commented positively on micro-teaching opportunities in particular. It was also reported that some schools use students on practicum to promote innovation. For such influence to work more widely, a close collaboration and clear communication is needed between the programmes and the schools in which the practicum is based

2.3 Noting the importance that the School and University were placing on flexible and e-learning, the Panel was keen to understand how good practice in the use of ICT in teaching was modelled by academic staff teaching future teachers. Its understanding is that this is largely seen in the use of Moodle and presentation of teaching materials.

With respect to specific course content, the Panel heard that a dedicated course/unit on integrating ICT in schools had been removed as part of the move to semesterisation but that its reinstatement was being reconsidered.

While technology is becoming more important in schools internationally, the Panel was also conscious that good access to technology is not available in all schools in Fiji. It therefore considered that the School's approach to ICT in the curriculum and in its own teaching was appropriate at this point. However, this is an area that staff may need support to develop further, as digital technologies develop for enabling collaboration amongst students and teachers across Fiji.

2.4 The professional practicum is an important aspect of teacher education programmes internationally and this is also reflected in the FNU teacher education programmes. The Panel

heard that the School managed professional practicum requirements carefully and paid attention to students being placed in schools where they had access to support. In practice, this meant that students were encouraged to undertake a practicum near to their home, particularly for the first practicum.

Providing effective support for students on practicums requires considerable resources. While the practicum seemed to be well organised in placing students, the support in these programmes seemed to come from the lecturing staff which added to their workloads and reduced their available time to undertake research and professional development.

The Panel heard that practicum requirements had recently changed, as a consequence of the move to semesterisation. The new practicum requirements appear to have less flexibility in their scheduling and a clash with high school examinations is emerging for the second practicum for BEd (Secondary students). The Panel **recommends** that the School take urgent steps to resolve this matter.

The panel noted that the practicum assessment template in the review documentation related to earlier practicum structures. In revisiting practicum requirements, the Panel **recommends** that the School should ensure that the practicum expectations and assessment template have been updated to reflect the new practicum arrangements.

Finally, with respect to the practicum, this is an intensive period of learning in which time and reflection are critical to achieve an acceptable level of professional practice. The development of professional self-regulation is thus an important focus in assessing performance. The Panel **recommends** that the School should consider international practice in assessing a practicum, with a particular focus on the progression of learning and the degree of reflection on professional practice. This is a potential area for benchmarking.

- 2.5 Teaching quality is monitored through course and teaching evaluations which take place at the end of the semester. The course evaluations provided to the Panel¹⁷ did not provide contextual information such as response rate (although this was reported as being low), the number of responses, or the typical range of responses from other courses. This may of course be provided elsewhere, and ranges can be determined from overall reports.¹⁸ Students (and staff) did not appear to be aware of or know what feedback on teaching or the course had been provided by the class.

The Panel **recommends** that institutional processes for collecting and disseminating the analysis of course evaluations be reviewed. Processes do exist but the Panel heard of inconsistent practice and that analyses were not made available to teaching staff. Course evaluation data needs to be made available in a timely manner to the staff responsible for the courses to enable course renewal and to enhance programme quality.

¹⁷ CHESR 5-1-3

¹⁸ CHESR 5-1-2 CTE Report Trimester 1 2018

Students also need to be provided with feedback on their feedback to 'close the loop' on feedback and to demonstrate to students that their feedback is taken seriously by the University. The Panel **recommends** that summaries of course evaluations by previous cohorts be made available to current students, and where feasible to the cohort of students who have provided the feedback.

- 2.6 The Panel heard that other methods for monitoring teaching quality, including peer review of teaching, had been explored but were not currently embedded in normal practice. Given the importance of ongoing reflection in teaching professional practice, the Panel encourages the School to develop shared expectations around the use of peer review, and model this for students as future teachers.

The (draft) Academic Quality Assurance Manual (AQAM)¹⁹ makes reference to 'good teaching' and its importance but does not appear to provide guidelines as to what constitutes good teaching at FNU. The Panel also heard that advice on what constituted good teaching was limited and that some efforts were being made to develop advice or standards. As the University implements the policies and processes in the AQAM, the Panel encourages the School to consider what constitutes good teaching in practice for them in higher education, specifically in teacher education.

- 2.7 The University's expectations regarding academic integrity are set out on its website²⁰ and academic dishonesty is addressed in the University Academic and Student Regulations.²¹ These materials pay particular attention to plagiarism, although other forms of academic dishonesty are covered in the regulations. The Panel heard that lecturers did make use of Turnitin and that Turnitin is integrated into Moodle. However, there do not appear any policy settings and Turnitin is not used consistently.
- 2.8 The Panel heard some comment to the effect that some class sizes were larger than desirable but did not gain the view that these were anomalous in comparison with teacher education programmes internationally.

¹⁹ CHESR 1-1-16

²⁰ <https://www.fnu.ac.fj/new/article/3153-avoid-plagism> Accessed 20200227

²¹ https://www.fnu.ac.fj/new/images/policies-regulations/University_Academic_and_Student_Regulations_2018-.pdf Accessed 20200227

3. Assessment and student achievement

Guideline: Assessment and student achievement.

Assessment tasks should be appropriate to the intended learning outcomes; they should be fair, reliable, valid and sufficient for the level of study; assessment tasks and achievement should be moderated or benchmarked to ensure comparability with similar programs at the same level.

3.1 Section 1.11 commented on the need to align assessment with course learning outcomes. During the site visit the Panel was able to view marked examples of assessments.

The Panel considered that the quantity of overall assessment levels was high and the Panel also heard comment that scheduling of assessment deadlines presented challenges at times. The Panel **recommends** that the School review the assessment load – for students and staff - across courses within programmes and, in doing so, examine the number of pieces of assessment and types of assessment to ensure they align with course learning outcomes.

The Panel notes that course learning outcomes do not necessarily require separate assessment tasks. One assessment task can be designed to address more than one learning outcomes. Integration of some topics could lead to more complex, tiered assessment tasks.

3.2 The University and School have in place oversight and moderation processes for assessment. The Panel reviewed the University's assessment policy and **commends** the University for the development of a good practice set of assessment guidelines.

3.3 The Panel explored the moderation and consistency of assessment in practice and were satisfied that the School had robust practices in place. The rubrics to support students' understanding of what was required and what was needed for extension, however, were variable across the courses. A review of rubrics across courses within a programme would be useful for staff and students and assist with greater consistency in expectations, especially across the requirements for discipline specialisms in the secondary programme.

3.4 The School also has comprehensive processes in place for the assessment of the professional practicum. This involves the use of in-school teacher supervisors as assessors. This is a high-stakes piece of assessment for students as they are unable to progress to the second practicum if they do not pass the first. This report has already commented on the need to include assessment in any revisiting of practicum requirements (Section 2.4).

3.5 The students the Panel spoke to indicated that they received useful feedback on their work. They also indicated that they were given good direction on the expectations of assessment, including being provided with rubrics.

3.6 Academic integrity was discussed in Section 2.7.

4. Student learning support and feedback

Guideline: Student learning support and feedback.

Students should be provided with adequate support to facilitate their learning, including pastoral support where appropriate. Students should have avenues for feeding back their experience and any concerns they might have to staff.

- 4.1 The Panel explored the range of learning support available to students in teacher education programmes. According to the Self-review, these include course advice, transition and orientation programmes, counselling, support for residential students, sports and clubs and societies. It was pleasing to see the number of clubs that were aligned with social and local issues. Peer-assisted learning has been introduced in some subject areas.
- 4.2 Students are advised of the availability of support services at orientation²². Information is also available on the University website and the University has developed a first-year experience app and other dedicated resources for first-year students.²³
- 4.3 Students at risk of poor academic performance are identified by staff and encouraged to seek support. The University has been developing a system for monitoring student progress. The Panel **affirms** the development of the Early Alert Response System (EARS) and considers it has the potential to be of value to both students and staff.²⁴ It thought the direct engagement with academic staff was a positive aspect of this system.
- 4.4 The University has established 'hubs' for English language²⁵ support and maths²⁶ support. Students can attend scheduled sessions, virtual sessions or access self-study materials. Some concerns were raised by staff that cultural norms may inhibit students from seeking support through the hubs. However, the students the Panel spoke to did not share this concern. The Panel also noted that it may take some time for the hubs to become embedded in normal practice for students and staff. The Panel **commends** the University for its provision of support through hubs for English and maths.
- 4.5 The Panel explored the support available for students while they are on their professional practicum and were advised that students are provided with all the materials that a teacher would be expected to have access to. They are also able to access university library resources (although this may be dependent on internet availability at their practicum school). Local libraries are also available in some districts.

²² Supplementary materials provided at site visit

²³ SR p34, <https://www.fnu.ac.fj/new/first-year-experience/succeed-fnu> accessed 20200228

²⁴ <https://www.fnu.ac.fj/new/ears> Accessed 20200227

²⁵ <https://www.fnu.ac.fj/new/learner-enhancement/elh> accessed 20200228

²⁶ <https://www.fnu.ac.fj/new/learner-enhancement/mhh> accessed 20200218

- 4.6 The Panel also explored the School's commitment to inclusivity, particularly with respect to students with disabilities. Its assessment is that this is still a developing area for the School although it has taken positive steps with a specific 'Understanding inclusive education' course in the BEd (Primary).²⁷ In terms of access to education programmes for students with disabilities, the University Disability Coordinator develops an 'access plan' for a student. The access plans are approved by the relevant Faculty and the Disability Coordinator maintains contact with the student. As far as the Panel could determine, there were no professional minimum standards related to addressing inclusive education.
- 4.7 Many of the staff the Panel met with were clearly committed to supporting student learning and a number were engaged in supporting extra-curricula activities including sports, faith-based support, support for ethnic groups, and activities that sought to provide students with insights into the lives and needs of people with disabilities as well as support for some of these people. The Panel **commends** staff commitment to supporting both student learning and extra-curricula activities.
- 4.8 The processes for students to raise concerns, complaints or grievances are set out in the University Academic and Student Regulations. In practice, it appeared to the Panel that students were able to raise issues and concerns directly with staff or with management. However, from the students the Panel met with, it appeared that students were not aware of formal processes for addressing issues. The Panel would not wish to discourage students from raising issues directly with staff, but it **recommends** the University review the effectiveness of processes for making students aware of complaints and grievance policies and practices. This should include ensuring BEd (Secondary) students know how to and are supported to raise concerns and provide positive feedback in both their education and disciplinary content courses.
- 4.9 The Self-review materials made reference to student positions on academic committees.²⁸ However, the Panel was unable to see how this worked in practice, what training and support students received and how the University 'heard and heeded' student voices in academic decision-making. The Panel **recommends** that the University review the effectiveness of the student voice, including student membership of committees, support for students to contribute to committees and other mechanisms such as student representatives in courses.
- 4.10 The Panel noted that the University has a process in place for recognising high achieving students through the award of a 'Gold medal'.

²⁷ <https://programmes.fnu.ac.fj/Details.aspx?id=1181> accessed 20200228

²⁸ SR p34.

5. Infrastructure and resourcing to support the programme

Guideline: Infrastructure to support the programme.

Institutions should have adequate infrastructure and resourcing to support teaching in the programme and student learning and ensure that infrastructure is sustainable and safe.

- 5.1 Student numbers in education programmes have increased substantially (by almost 40%) since 2016²⁹ and the majority of these students are located on the Lautoka campus. The Self-review identified resourcing and space on the Lautoka campus as an issue it is currently addressing. The University has invested in physical and digital infrastructure and has an ongoing programme of capital investment. The Panel notes that such investment will undoubtedly support the future delivery of the programmes under review.
- 5.2 The Self-review sets out planned space developments³⁰ including science labs, arts and music workshops, and study space for students. However, the Panel did not gain a sense of the priorities or timelines for these developments. The Panel also heard of other specific space or infrastructure requirements from the groups that it met with. These included fencing of Lautoka campus³¹ and space for staff to meet outside of scheduled meetings. The fencing is a student safety and well-being issue and supporting documents indicate that it is a concern for residential students.
- 5.3 The Panel appreciates that infrastructure and resources are common university challenges and need to be kept under active review. It **recommends** that priorities are developed in consultation and shared with staff. Engaging staff in identifying priorities enables them to appreciate that resourcing includes staff, spaces and specialist facilities and that not everything can be addressed at once.
- 5.4 Staffing is discussed elsewhere in this review (Section 6). The Panel took the view that resourcing also included intellectual leadership resources in the form of senior academic appointments. Education programmes currently have only one full professorial staff member, and that Professor has other duties in addition to education programmes. Equivalent international programmes would typically have a staffing profile that included more appointments at Professor and Associate Professor levels. This is important given the number of students and the leadership required for research-led teaching.
- 5.5 The School recognises the need to appoint further professorial staff³² and the Panel agrees that the need to address the lack of senior appointments is of critical importance. Such appointments can expand the extent of intellectual leadership in research-led teaching and the delivery of postgraduate programmes in education. The reduced availability of senior academic leadership presents a risk to future programme development. The Panel **recommends** that the University

²⁹ Calculated from SR p37.

³⁰ SR p28.

³¹ SR p39.

³² SR p44.

urgently address the number of senior academic leaders in the School as it increases its research and development commitment.

6. Staff support and professional practice

Guideline: Staff support and professional practice.

Staff should be provided with adequate support to facilitate and enhance their teaching.

- 6.1 The Self-review sets out the profile of education staff. As noted previously, the majority of staff are appointed at the lecturer level. Most lecturers hold a Masters qualification.³³ As noted in the previous section, the numbers of professorial staff are very low.
- 6.2 The School is undertaking a major programme of supporting staff to gain higher level qualifications. At the time of the review, 22 staff were undertaking a PhD and a further seven a Masters degree. The University provides support for staff to undertake further study, including scholarships for some staff to undertake doctoral studies overseas. The Panel **commends** the School for its support for staff to complete postgraduate qualifications.
- 6.3 Both the Self-review and comments heard by the Panel refer to staff adopting modern teaching approaches, particularly around ICT. Opportunities and support for teaching staff to develop their practice and make greater use of ICT do exist. However, this was characterised as being slow and the onus appears to be on staff to take up these opportunities. The Panel was not clear that there was a planned and intentional approach to this that took into account other staff responsibilities and obligations.
- 6.4 The Panel appreciates that staff are engaged in studying for additional qualifications and adopting modern teaching methods. However, it also **recommends** that the School develop opportunities for systematic learning by groups of staff on topics related to enhancing programme quality and student experience, especially relating to contemporary learning and teaching methods and the use of ICT. While resourcing needs to be available to support such professional development, it would have positive outcomes such as building collegiality, consistency of practice and cross-programme awareness.
- 6.5 According to the Self-review, the majority of staff are members of a teachers' union.³⁴ Beyond this, the Panel gained the view that staff did participate in professional and community organisations. However, this seemed to be at the discretion of the individual staff member. The Panel also heard that support was not available for participation in professional organisations. It encourages the School to take a holistic view of the support needed for ongoing professional development of teacher educators.
- 6.6 The Panel heard from a number of sources that teaching loads were high in terms of comparison with other jurisdictions. A minimum of sixteen contact hours per week, no matter the form of that contact (lectures, tutorials, field trips, supervision, office hours) leaves relatively little time for preparation, marking, moderation and research, as well as professional development. The Panel appreciates that this is a matter of resourcing and it has not reviewed workload information. It

³³ Calculated from SR pp 40-43.

³⁴ SR p39.

notes however that there is wide variation in the number of courses taught by staff³⁵ and suggests that a mechanism for understanding and making transparent staff workloads could be useful.

6.7 Processes and requirements for staff promotion are set out in the University's Promotions and Appraisals Policy.³⁶ Promotions and appraisals are part of the same policy and while the HR policies are extensive, they do not appear to contain specific criteria or guidance of what is required to be promoted to a higher teaching 'grade' or 'level' or what constitutes meritorious or excellent performance in appraisal, especially in teaching.

6.8 The Panel understands that the promotions and performance appraisal process has changed recently. From 2020 all staff are required to have a performance management plan which will be reviewed annually.³⁷

6.9 A teaching excellence award is managed by the PVC Learning and Teaching's office. The Panel did not gain a view on how School of Education staff have participated in this or other schema for recognising teaching performance. It encourages the School to not only recognise and celebrate excellent teaching but to disseminate good practice in whatever ways are practicable.

6.10 The Panel met with new staff and gained the view that orientation and induction processes were variable across the School. It encourages the School to develop a common approach for inducting all new staff with any variations to be intentional. For example, staff appointed from outside of Fiji may require some different or additional orientation and induction materials.

³⁵ CHESR 7-5.

³⁶ SR p39 and CHESR 1-1-9-1.

³⁷ CHESR 1-1-9-2.

7. Employability of graduates and stakeholder satisfaction

Guideline: Employability of graduates and stakeholder satisfaction.

The institution should have processes to gain feedback from key stakeholders about graduate satisfaction of the programme and the employability of graduates.

7.1 The Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts is the major employer of graduates from the B. Ed. (Secondary) and B. Ed. (Primary). Graduates apply to the MEHA and are assigned to a school. Graduates from the HCTTVETT are either currently employed or will seek employment in TVET. MEHA's role in curriculum setting was referred to in Section 1. This section covers their role as an employer of graduates.

Graduates need to meet the requirements of the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority³⁸ before they can teach in a school. These include police clearance and a medical certificate. Students also receive an induction certificate. Registration is provisional for one year in the first instance which is then upgraded to full registration, subject to certain criteria. Teachers need to re-register every three years.

7.2 The Panel understood that new graduates did not have any difficulty in gaining employment. According to graduate destination reports³⁹, the employment rate for graduates from the College of Humanities and Education is around 80%. However, these figures are not broken down to School or qualification level. The Panel assumes it would be possible for the Institutional Research and Planning Office to provide this data.

7.3 The University collects feedback from its graduates on their experience with the programme they completed. Data are collected when students collect their gowns for their graduation ceremony. As above, the reports on the programme experience survey do not present data by School or qualification. Data are collected on suggested improvements to the programme and are potentially useful for curriculum renewal. The Panel **recommends** that the University consider extending the graduate feedback survey further so that it captures perspectives on the attainment of graduate attributes and competencies. The methodology for administering the surveys should be reviewed, or the limitations of the current methodology should be acknowledged.

7.4 Overall, student satisfaction with the quality of their course for College of Humanities and Education students appears to be line with University responses. For the University, 86% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with a statement regarding their satisfaction with the quality of their course.

7.5 However, external stakeholders that the Panel spoke to raised some concerns about graduate qualities and competencies. They were concerned that graduates were not well prepared for teaching in remote locations and in multi-grade classes and that some graduates did not

³⁸ <http://www.ftrb.gov.fj/> accessed 20200323

³⁹ CHESR 8-1-1, 8-1-2, 8-1-3.

demonstrate the sorts of confidence and behaviours that they considered should be present in a graduate teacher.

The Panel does not dismiss these concerns but the comments they heard were anecdotal in nature. There appeared to be gaps and inefficiencies in the ways that MEHA changes were communicated to teaching staff and MEHA staff and other stakeholders appeared not to appreciate perspectives other than their own, or acknowledge feedback on how changes had been implemented. For example, MEHA staff commented to the effect that students had not gained experience of teaching in rural or remote schools. However, the School of Education has good reasons for not placing students in remote locations for teaching practice

- 7.6 The Panel **recommends** that the extension of the graduate destination survey recommended above be supplemented with an employer survey so that an evidence base of what is professionally valued can be used to inform discussions with external stakeholders and ongoing enhancement of the programmes.
- 7.7 The Panel came to the understanding that new teachers received little systematic professional development and support in their first years of teaching. It also heard that new teachers were more likely to be placed in remote schools. The Panel understands that new teacher graduates have a role in changing the school teaching culture in Fiji, but recognises that this is a challenge for new teachers. Teacher education at FNU is one component of ongoing professional development. In order to ensure strength in the whole system, the Panel suggests that these matters should be discussed by the School with MEHA, FHEC, the FTRA and Heads and Principals associations so that all parties have a shared understanding of the issues involved and can develop solutions collaboratively.
- 7.8 There are complexities in responding to the needs of multiple external bodies. These can be exacerbated by internal university processes that manage the flow of information between external stakeholders and teaching staff. While all parties expressed positive intentions, the Panel **recommends** that the University strengthens the relationship with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts and other key external stakeholders. One aim of a stronger relationship would be to reach a common view of the desirable professional attributes and competencies of graduates. A shared view would serve both the industry and the programmes.
- 7.9 The Panel heard mixed views on the international acceptability of graduates. On the one hand concerns about the loss of graduates overseas (mainly to New Zealand and Australia) were raised; on the other some questions were raised about whether teacher education programmes were recognised.

It is clear from evidence that some FNU trained teachers are finding work overseas, although this may be predominantly in primary education. Given the reservations that the Panel alluded to earlier about the depth of disciplinary content in the three-year secondary programme, it may be that the secondary programme qualification would be less portable. However, the Panel recognises that each national jurisdiction will have its own requirements and processes for recognition, especially in-country professional experience.

Conclusion

Overall, the Panel acknowledged the considerable progress that has been made in the past 10 years since the establishment of FNU. The transition of a college of education to a university school has been experienced in many other jurisdictions and all such transitions take time and effort. While there are a number of legacy issues remaining, these first 10 years provide the foundation for developing procedures and protocols that express the identity and philosophy of the School of Education as a part of FNU and as an important professional contributor to the quality of education in Fiji.

The School of Education at FNU is delivering teacher education programmes that are responding to Fiji national priorities for education. The Panel has commended the University and the School of Education for a number of its practices and made recommendations in areas that it considers will assist the School and University in delivering teacher education programmes of an international standard.

Acknowledgements

The Panel wishes to acknowledge the commitment of the School of Education and Fiji National University to quality assurance and their willingness to engage in external quality review.

The Panel records its appreciation to the staff, students and external stakeholders who met with them. The Panel and AQA have also appreciated the support from Ms. Preetika Mani throughout preparation for and during the site visit.

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) was established by New Zealand universities in 1994. It is an operationally independent body whose purpose is to contribute to the advancement of university education by:

- engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of academic quality,
- applying quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that assist universities in improving student engagement, academic experience and learning outcomes, and
- supporting confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities.

The AQA helps support universities in achieving standards of excellence in research and teaching by conducting institutional audits of the processes in universities which underpin academic quality and by identifying and disseminating information on good practice in developing and maintaining quality in higher education. Activities include a quarterly newsletter and regular meetings on quality enhancement topics.

The AQA interacts with other educational bodies within New Zealand and with similar academic quality assurance agencies internationally. The Agency is a full member of the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), and of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). AQA has been assessed as adhering to the INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance.

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- peer review
- evidence-based
- externally benchmarked
- enhancement-led.

Audits and reviews are carried out by panels of trained auditors who are selected from universities' senior academic staff and other professionals with knowledge of academic auditing and evaluation, and who have been approved by the AQA Board. Each panel includes at least one overseas external member.

Further information about AQA and its audit methodology is available from the AQA website:

www.aqa.ac.nz.



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