Cycle 5 Academic Audit of New Zealand Universities: An Analysis of Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations

Sheelagh Matear

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

AQA | Academic
QualityAgency
For New Zealand Universities

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Abstract

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) undertakes periodic quality assurance reviews of New Zealand universities in the form of an academic audit. The fifth cycle of academic audit took place between 2013 and 2016 and utilised a framework of 40 guideline statements across seven academic activity themes:

> (1) Leadership and management of teaching and learning;
> (2) Student profile: access, admission and transition processes;
> (3) Curriculum and assessment;
> (4) Student engagement and achievement;
> (5) Student feedback and support;
> (6) Teaching quality; and
> (7) Supervision of research students.

Academic audits are undertaken by a panel of experienced, independent peers. Panels consider all guideline statements and audit panels may make **commendations** of "excellent practice with demonstrable good outcomes", **affirmations** of "action a university is already taking to address an area … requiring attention" and **recommendations** advising of "an activity requiring attention".

This paper uses these commendations, affirmations and recommendations (CARs) as a lens through which to examine findings of Cycle 5 academic audit reports (available on the AQA website). Overall, results indicate that New Zealand universities have maintained high academic quality standards and there are no issues of systemic concern. These findings are reflective of the sector as a whole and will apply differently to individual universities.

New Zealand universities have strengths in the academic activity theme areas of leadership and management of teaching and learning; access, admission and transitions; and supervision of postgraduate students. Particular strengths are found in strategic and operational planning, having appropriate information resources, access, admission and transition processes and learning support. Universities are specifically considering access, admission and transition for Māori students and Pasifika students.

In Cycle 5, universities were actively developing their risk management and staff recruitment and induction processes.

Despite it being an area of strength, leadership and management of teaching and learning is also a priority area for further development, along with curriculum and assessment and teaching quality; particularly delegations, benchmarking of academic programmes, assessment, assessing and monitoring teaching quality and support for teaching development. Academic advice for students, feedback from students and resourcing of research students are other specific areas for further development. More broadly, universities should continue to ensure consistency of decision-making across faculties, divisions and schools within universities.

These findings and their implications have contributed to the development of the audit framework for Cycle 6 Academic Audit.

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Glossary: Key terms, acronyms and abbreviations

A	Affirmation(s) of action a university is already taking
AAT	Academic activity theme (section of the audit framework)
AQA	Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities, Te Pokapū Kounga Mātauranga mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa
AU	The University of Auckland - Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
AUT	Auckland University of Technology - Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau
C	Commendation(s) of excellent practice with demonstrable good outcomes
CARs	Commendations, affirmations and recommendations
GS	Guideline statement(s)
KPI	Key performance indicator
LU	Lincoln University - Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki
MU	Massey University – Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa
OU	University of Otago -- Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo
Panel	Panels engaged by AQA to conduct academic audits of universities
R	Recommendation(s) of an activity or area requiring attention
UC	University of Canterbury - Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
VUW	Victoria University of Wellington - Te Whare Wānanga o Te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui
WU	University of Waikato – Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Introduction

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) forms part of the external quality assurance framework for New Zealand universities. In its quality assurance role, it undertakes periodic, institutional reviews of New Zealand's universities in the form of academic audits. Between 2013 and 2016 AQA undertook a fifth cycle of academic audits of New Zealand universities.

This paper is the second of three papers that review Cycle 5 Academic Audit. The first paper reviewed the process elements of Cycle 5, and identified lessons for Cycle 6 (Matear, 2018). This paper provides an analysis of Cycle 5 audit 'findings' through the lens of commendations, affirmations and recommendations (CARs) made by audit panels and identifies themes in these findings.   The third paper will consider universities' responses to and the impact of Cycle 5 Academic Audit.

The processes of academic audit are set out in university and auditor handbooks (Cameron, 2013) and were the subject of the first of these Cycle 5 review papers (Matear, 2018). In brief, they comprise a self-review by the university against the guideline statements leading to a self-review report and evidence-portfolio which is reviewed by an audit panel. The audit panel considers the evidence provided by the university and will also draw on other publicly available information, reports prepared on behalf of students (usually by a students' association) and further information gained in interviews with "a range of staff, students and other stakeholders" (Cameron, 2013, p.6) during a site visit (or visits if the university has more than one significant campus) before reaching their conclusions. These conclusions are presented in an academic audit report and Cycle 5 Academic Audit reports are publicly available on the AQA website[1].

In addition to being "founded on self-review" and "evidence-based", academic quality in universities is "assured by peer-review" (Cameron, 2013). Audits are undertaken by an independent panel of experienced and qualified peers, including at least one international panel member. Audit panels may make commendations (C) of "excellent practice with demonstrable good outcomes", affirmations (A) of "action a university is already taking to address an area … requiring attention" and recommendations (R) advising of "an activity requiring attention" (Cameron, 2013). Panels do not make commendations, affirmations or recommendations for every guideline statement in an audit, although every guideline statement is assessed for each university in the audit process. Where commendations, affirmations or recommendations are not made, panels will have considered that the university is meeting the guideline statement. Multiple commendations, affirmations or recommendations may be made with respect to a single guideline statement.

The objectives of this paper are to:

- Examine areas of strength and good practice, current activity and areas for development in universities, indicated by commendations, affirmations and recommendations made in audit reports;
- Provide a resource for universities and others interested in the quality assurance practices of New Zealand universities by compiling commendations, affirmations and recommendations made in Cycle 5 academic audit reports into a single document; and

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[1] www.aqa.ac.nz

- Suggest areas for further examination and implications for Cycle 6.

The remainder of this section briefly sets out the method adopted for this paper, including caveats that should be observed in considering findings and limitations of the paper. This is followed by analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations for each of the academic activity themes (AAT) of the Cycle 5 audit framework. Finally, the paper draws conclusions and identifies implications.

Method

This paper focuses on commendations, affirmations and recommendations made by academic audit panels on the basis that panels considered these areas to be important or that they "warranted particular attention" (Kirkwood, 2013, p.2) and to maintain consistency with analyses of previous audit cycles (Kirkwood, 2013). It uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to identify areas of strength (commendations), areas of current activity (affirmations) and areas for development (recommendations) across New Zealand universities as a whole; and then themes across and within the framework of guideline statements. It is not intended to assess individual universities, as this has already occurred in the audits of universities. More detail on individual guideline statements (GS), or groups of guideline statements, can be found in thematic notes[2] and in other papers. Considerably more detail for individual universities and guideline statements can be found in the academic audit reports themselves.

The analysis in the paper is structured as follows. First, overall patterns of commendations, affirmations and recommendations are considered by looking at numbers of CARs/GS and percentages of CARs in academic activity themes of the audit framework. Individual guideline statements with higher numbers of commendations, affirmations or recommendations are also identified. Then, for each of the academic activity themes of the audit framework, the frequencies of CARs of GS in that theme are considered. Guideline statements that received 6 or more commendations, affirmations or recommendations in total (for example, 3 commendations, 2 affirmations and 1 recommendation) are further examined qualitatively. Additionally, guideline statements that had fewer than 6 CARs in total, but which had 4 commendations or recommendations are included. The analysis of individual guideline statements uses both the commendations, affirmations and recommendations and the full-text of the audit reports. Universities are identified in tables of commendations, affirmations and recommendations as this assists with the objective of identifying areas of good practice.

In Cycle 5 audit reports, 23 guideline statements received fewer than 6 commendations, affirmations or recommendations in total. Of those, 2 guideline statements with either 4 commendations or 4 recommendations are included in the analysis in this paper. The remainder are not assessed in detail in this paper but are presented in the Appendix and reference is also made to where these guideline statements have been included in other reports or papers.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations of the analysis undertaken in this paper. First, although numbers of CARS have been used to guide the structure of the paper, greater emphasis should be placed on the qualitative analyses. The qualitative data is considerably richer and of more value in appreciating a university's strengths and areas for development.

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[2] http://www.aqa.ac.nz/node/261

Second, guideline statements differ in scope and complexity and are not directly comparable with one another. Associated with this, audit panels endeavour to assess a university as it is, reflecting that university's priorities and context. Therefore, an assessment that results in a commendation, affirmation or recommendation for one university may not in another, although this does not mean that any guideline statement has escaped scrutiny.

Third, academic audits occur at a point in time and inevitably audit reports reflect the situation of a university at that point in time.   In his review of Cycle 1 academic audit reports, Woodhouse (1999) suggested that this type of overview is "more of a video than a still" (Background – 1). A further 'time' issue is that universities 'learn' as the cycle progresses and may have addressed issues that were the subject of recommendations for audits earlier in the cycle.

Fourth, as noted in the process review of Cycle 5 (Matear, 2018), overlap does exist between some guideline statements. The analysis in this paper examines the guideline statements as they are presented in the audit reports, even though, in some cases, particular content might have been addressed under a different guideline statement. Associated with this, the Cycle 5 audit framework is not the only framework that could have been used to assess themes in Cycle 5. Analyses of previous audit cycles (see for example, Kirkwood, 2013) have used a quality assurance cycle as a framework. However, previous audit cycles did not have the level of specificity that the Cycle 5 audit framework of guideline statements provides, making this an appropriate initial analysis of patterns and themes in Cycle 5 academic audit reports.

One of the challenges and a fifth limitation of this paper is its breadth of coverage. By reporting on the findings of Cycle 5 academic audits, the paper has the same scope as Cycle 5 Academic Audit, i.e. all teaching, learning and student support, including for postgraduate students (Cameron, 2013). Each of the guideline statements considered in this paper could be the subject of a paper in its own right. Where this has occurred, reference is made to other work. However, the paper does not attempt to embed, or ground, the findings of Cycle 5 academic audit within the body(ies) of research and practice that are relevant to each of the guideline statements. This is a matter for ongoing work and AQA welcomes engagement with researchers wishing to use audit findings further.   Another consequence of the breadth of coverage of this paper is that it requires some familiarity with the topics that are the subject of guideline statements. It is not intended to be an introduction to the academic quality of New Zealand universities. Such information can be found elsewhere, including on the AQA and Universities New Zealand websites. Those seeking further detail on any aspect of this paper should refer to the Cycle 5 academic audit reports for individual universities, available on the AQA website, or contact AQA.

Cycle 5 Academic Activity Themes and Higher Frequency Guideline Statements

The Cycle 5 Academic Audit Framework comprised 40 guideline statements across seven 'Academic Activity Themes'[3]:

1. Leadership and management of teaching and learning;
2. Student profile: access, admission and transition processes;
3. Curriculum and assessment;
4. Student engagement and achievement;
5. Student feedback and support;
6. Teaching quality; and
7. Supervision of research students.

Overall, audit panels in Cycle 5 made 194 commendations, affirmations and recommendations – 66 commendations (34%), 45 affirmations (23%) and 83 (43%) recommendations. The total number of commendations, affirmations and recommendations is slightly lower than the comparable total for Cycle 4 (Kirkwood, 2013). This is a little surprising as the greater specificity of the Cycle 5 audit framework might have invited rather more 'findings' (expressed as commendations, affirmations and recommendations). However, this is the fifth cycle of academic audit and the universities are mature in terms of quality assurance. It could therefore be considered that universities have become better at evidence-based self-review and universities and audit panels have been able to focus on areas deserving more attention.

The number of guideline statements differed between academic activity themes, making it more appropriate for comparative purposes to consider commendations, affirmations and recommendations per guideline statement (Figure 1) or percentages of commendations, affirmations and recommendations within themes (Figure 2).   Academic Activity Theme 3 (Curriculum and Assessment) received this highest number of commendations, affirmations and recommendations in total. However, there were more guideline statements in this theme and Figure 1 takes account of this. Figure 2 then shows the relative balance of commendations, affirmations and recommendations within each of the themes.

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[3] http://www.aqa.ac.nz/cycle5
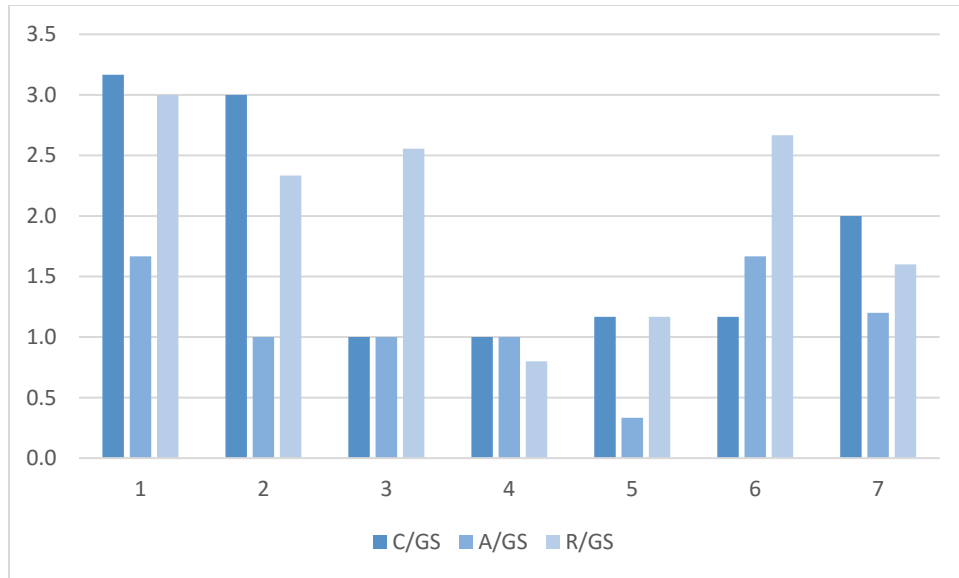
Figure 1 Commendations (C), Affirmations (A) and Recommendations (R) per Guideline Statement
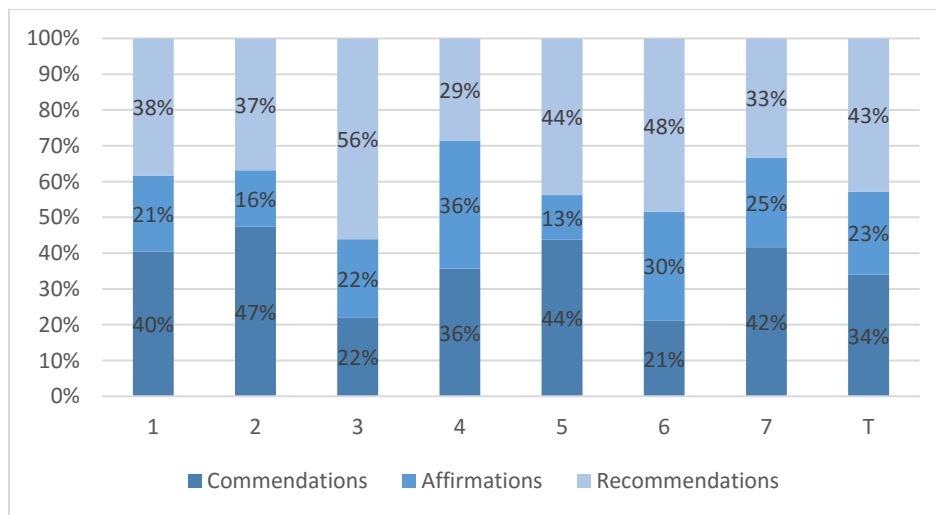
Figure 2 Percentage of commendations, affirmations and recommendations within each academic activity theme

X-axis for Figure 1 and Figure 2
1 Leadership and Management of Teaching and Learning   *5 Student Feedback and Support*
2 Student Profile: Access, Admission and Transition Processes   *6 Teaching Quality*
3 Curriculum and Assessment   *7 Supervision of Research Students*
4 Student Engagement and Achievement   *T Total*

Academic activity themes 1 (Leadership and management), 2 (Access, admission and transitions), 5 (Student feedback and support) and 7 (Supervision of research students) have higher levels of commendations, suggesting that universities demonstrate good practice in these areas, in particular. Themes 1 and 2 also have higher levels of recommendations, along with themes 3 (Curriculum and assessment) and 6 (Teaching quality), suggesting that audit panels saw these as areas requiring further

development. Academic activity themes 4 and 6 have the highest proportions of affirmations suggesting that universities have work underway in these areas particularly.

Individual guideline statements with higher levels of commendations, affirmations or recommendations are:

- GS 1.1 Delegations
- GS 1.2 Strategic and operational planning – this is the guideline statement with the highest number of both commendations and recommendations
- GS 1.5 Information resources
- GS 1.6 Risk management
- GS 2.2 Access and transition – second highest number of commendations
- GS 2.3 Academic advice – joint second highest number of recommendations
- GS 3.5 Benchmarking programmes
- GS 3.6 Assessment – joint second highest number of recommendations
- GS 5.2 Learning support
- GS 5.5 Feedback from students
- GS 6.1 Staff recruitment and induction – highest number of affirmations
- GS 6.3 Teaching quality – joint second highest number of recommendations
- GS 6.4 Teaching development – joint second highest number of recommendations.

Findings with respect to these guideline statements are discussed further in the sections on each of the academic activity themes below.

Guideline statements "articulate the *minimum requirements* [original emphasis] which students and other stakeholders might expect of a university, and which universities might expect of each other" (Cameron, 2013, p.8). Therefore, low frequencies, or absence, of commendations, affirmations or recommendations in audit reports are meaningful and suggestive of general good practice. This is the situation for 21 out of the 40 guideline statements in the Cycle 5 academic audit framework. However, it should be noted in the case of GS 3.9 "Universities should have and, where appropriate, use procedures to facilitate assessment in te reo Māori", that while universities have procedures in place, levels of uptake are low. Universities generally have good practice with respect to the following areas:

GS 1.3 Student input	GS 2.1 Admission and selection
GS 3.1 Programme approval	GS 3.4 Programme review
GS 3.7 Equivalence of learning outcomes	GS 3.9 Assessment in te reo Māori
GS 4.1 Student engagement	GS 4.2 Retention and completion
GS 4.3 Feedback to students	GS 4.4 Under-achieving students
GS 4.5 High-achieving students	GS 5.1 Academic appeals and grievances
GS 5.3 Personal support and safety	GS 5.4 Support on other campuses
GS 5.6 Feedback from graduates	GS 6.2 Research-active staff
GS 6.5 Teaching support on other campuses	GS 6.6 Teaching recognition
GS 7.1 Qualification of supervisors	GS 7.4 Thesis examination
GS 7.5 Postgraduate student feedback	

Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for these guideline statements are contained in the Appendix.

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From the perspective of examining patterns of CARs across the academic activity area and high frequency CARs, it can be concluded that:

- Audit panels placed emphasis on leadership and management of teaching and learning, access, admission and transitions, teaching quality and supervision of postgraduate students.
- Particularly good practices (commendations) and areas for further development (recommendations) were found in similar proportions in leadership and management of teaching and learning (AAT 1), with attention being focused on strategic and operational planning, delegations, information resources and risk management. These individual guideline statements are discussed further below.
- A similar pattern is seen in academic activity theme 2 – Access, admission and transitions processes, where panels commended access and transition processes but recommended further development of academic advice processes. These are discussed further below.
- Academic activity themes 3 – Curriculum and assessment and 6 – Teaching quality - have relatively higher proportions of recommendations, suggesting that these are areas where panels considered further development was required. These are examined further in the relevant sections below.
- In Cycle 5, panels considered that universities had good practices in the academic activity themes of Student engagement and achievement and student feedback and support, and across half of the guideline statements in the audit framework.

The following sections consider each of the academic activity themes further.

Leadership and Management of Teaching and Learning

The first academic activity theme of the Cycle 5 audit framework considered leadership and management of teaching and learning. There were six guideline statements in this theme addressing:

GS 1.1 Delegations,
GS 1.2 Strategic and operational planning,
GS 1.3 Student input,
GS 1.4 Infrastructure,
GS 1.5 Information resources, and
GS 1.6 Risk management.

The pattern of commendations, affirmations and recommendations for guideline statements in this theme is shown in Figure 3. Audit panels made more commendations, affirmations and recommendations in total and relative to the number of guideline statements for this theme. GS 1.2 "Universities should have appropriate strategic and operational planning documents which include objectives related to student achievement and teaching quality, with key performance indicators which inform academic quality assurance processes" received the highest total of commendations, affirmations and recommendations across the Cycle 5 academic audit reports.   With the exception of GS 1.3 "Universities should facilitate student input to planning, policy development and monitoring of key academic activities", all guideline statements in this theme received 6 or more CARs in total. As it falls below the 6 CAR threshold, GS 1.3 is not considered further in this paper, although further analysis is available in Matear, Varnham and Shaw (2018). However, it should be noted that audit panels for Cycle 5 did not include a student member and this could have influenced the findings made by audit panels.
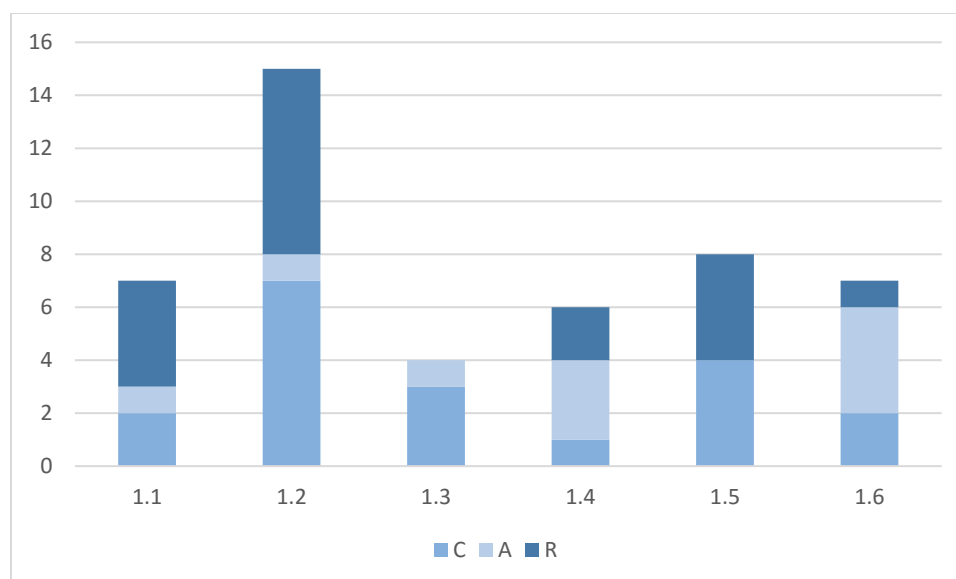
Figure 3 Leadership and management of teaching and learning

Delegations

Commendations, affirmations and recommendations made by audit panels with respect to GS 1.1 ("Universities should have clear delegations for decision making related to teaching and learning quality and research supervision, and for accountability for quality assurance of programmes and courses") are set out in Table 1.

Table 1 GS 1.1 Delegations

Commendations	Recommendations
C1 The Panel **commends** the University on its attention to developing, assessing and rewarding leadership capability of all staff, as appropriate to their role within the University, and to its articulation of its philosophy and objectives in the Leadership Framework. (AU) C1 The Panel **commends** the University on its well-regarded Academic Leadership Development Programme that identifies future leaders, and equips and supports them to deliver on their delegated responsibilities. (OU)	R1 The Panel **recommends** that the University documents and communicates to staff with greater clarity its delegations for academic decision-making, in particular at the College level. (MU) R0* The Panel **recommends** that the University develops a formal delegations schedule to identify where specific authorities for academic decisions lie and ensures that this schedule is accessible to all staff. (VUW) R1 The Panel **recommends** that when the new management and committee structures are finalised the University review which academic decisions are taken at which level of the organisation and articulates and communicates to all staff a clear delegations statement for all academic decision-making. (LU)
Affirmations	
A1 The Panel **affirms** the objectives of and planning for the Faculty Administration Review (FAR) project, in particular with respect to the clarification of leadership roles and administrative responsibilities and the potential for systematisation and consequent consistency of academic processes across the University. (AU)	R2 The Panel **recommends** that the University expedite the implementation of the Policy Refresh Project and ensure that all academic policies and procedures which have not been reviewed since 2010 be reviewed and, if necessary, revised by the end of 2017 and that henceforth all academic policies and procedures be reviewed within five years of the previous review. (LU)

* Recommendation unnumbered in audit report

There is some commonality in the CARs for this GS in that the two commendations both emphasise the importance of developing leadership capability, while the recommendations and affirmation either relate to the need to clarify delegations and decision-making authorities or to specific projects, including whole of university restructure and refresh of policy frameworks.

Other comments in audit reports for this guideline statement describe academic decision-making structures in place in universities at the time of the Cycle 5 audit. The commendations with respect to leadership development reflect a more explicit shift to distributed leadership. For some universities, audit panels also commented on the need to ensure equity in decision making across a large organisation and noted mechanisms through which lack of equity or inconsistency would be identified and addressed. Different mechanisms are used to convey delegations and responsibilities. However, where these did not appear to be understood across the university, a recommendation that a formal schedule of delegations be developed has been made.

Strategic and operational planning

GS 1.2 "Universities should have appropriate strategic and operational planning documents which include objectives related to student achievement and teaching quality, with key performance indicators which inform academic quality assurance processes" stands out among guideline statements with the highest total number of commendations, affirmations and recommendations.   Given the scope and importance of this guideline statement, this should not be particularly surprising. Seven commendations, seven recommendations and one affirmation were made in audit reports (Table 2).

Table 2 GS 1.2 Strategic and operational planning

Commendations	Recommendations
C1 The Panel **commends** the University on its strong strategic planning process and the extent of stakeholder consultation for its new Strategic Plan. The Panel endorses the development of appropriate KPIs and reporting processes which will enable the University to measure progress and the Council, in particular, to satisfy itself of the quality and relevance of the University's activities. (VUW)	R2 The Panel **recommends** that when it reviews its Academic Plan the University also maps against it (or its replacement) the other institutional plans related to curriculum and student experience to ensure consistency and connectedness of objectives, measures and indicators. (WU)
C4 The Panel **commends** the University's Learning Partnership initiative, noting the wide-ranging and comprehensive plans, guidelines, resources and activities which support the philosophy of learner-centred academic processes within a coordinated framework. (VUW)	R1 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews those institutional academic practices for which faculties, schools and departments currently have responsibility in order to identify instances of inconsistency or inequity and to identify good practices which might be shared; and that the University develops institutional policies, procedures and/or guidelines which ensure that practices facilitate consistent quality of support for staff and students, particularly with respect to: [GS 2.3, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1 and 6.1] (WU)
C3 The Panel **commends** the University on the clarity of its commitment to Māori in the Strategic Plan and with respect to Māori and Pacific development in the Equity and Diversity Strategy 2010-2014; on the endeavours made to ensure management and academic structure and leadership are appropriate to give effect to the University's plans for Māori and Pasifika students and staff; and on the manner in which provision is made in many parts of the University to try and ensure distinctive learning styles are recognised and specific needs are met. (VUW)	R1 The Panel **recommends** that the University review the delegation and implementation of core academic processes and processes related to the assurance of teaching quality in order to identify where central monitoring, including reporting and analysis, is necessary to provide the University with institutional assurance of the quality of these processes and their outcomes. (UC)
C2 The Panel **commends** the University on its coherent and coordinated suite of Strategies, Action Plans and Frameworks to guide its teaching, learning and student support, including	R3 The Panel **recommends** that future strategic plans (including plans related to teaching and learning) include objectives related to student achievement and teaching quality, with key performance indicators which inform

the specific requirements related to equity objectives and to student retention and achievement. (VUW)	academic quality assurance processes. (LU)
C2 The Panel **commends** the University for its coherent strategic planning framework and associated objectives which are incorporated at an operational level into individual academic divisions, schools and departments in ways that are relevant, meaningful and disciplinary specific. (OU)	R1 The Panel **recommends** that the University develops a high-level benchmarking statement which sets out the objectives and scope of institutional benchmarking, guidelines for operationalising benchmarking for different kinds of activities and outcomes and designated responsibilities for ensuring appropriate action is taken in response to benchmarked evaluations. (AU)
C3 The Panel **commends** the University for its strong culture that recognises that all developments should be thoughtful, and supported by data and research. (OU)	R4 The Panel **recommends** that the University urgently address Recommendation 2 from the 2012 Cycle 4 academic audit regarding externality and benchmarking, by exploring opportunities for benchmarking academic practice and academic standards in order to identify and confirm good
C1 The Panel **commends** the University on its data-driven approach to planning, decision-making, monitoring, analysis and reporting across the spectrum of its academic and administrative activities and on the widespread use made of the Scorecard Dashboard. (AUT)	practice, to improve Lincoln academic processes where appropriate, and to ensure Lincoln student achievement is externally validated. (LU)
	GS 1.2 R1 The Panel **recommends** that the University consider whether the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching is giving full effect to its strategic role and contribution, including implementation and monitoring of progress of strategic direction and initiatives. (OU)
Affirmations	
A1 The Panel **affirms** the Whenua Strategy and encourages the University to move promptly to systematic implementation, with appropriate goals and performance measures, as is feasible within the objectives and capability of the University. (LU)	

Commendations made with respect to this guideline statement relate to strong planning processes – generally and for specific plans, coherence of strategic plans, and the use of evidence and data-informed decision-making. Unsurprisingly, recommendations and the affirmation commented on the need for greater coherence and use of evidence and indicators. Other recommendations were concerned with the extent to which core academic processes are, or should be, centralised. Two recommendations concerned benchmarking – one at a policy level and the other to strengthen external referencing and validation.   The final recommendation concerned a specific committee in a university.

The full text of the audit reports for this guideline statement comment further on university planning and reporting processes, highlighting multiplicity of plans and need for co-ordination and alignment across activities and areas of focus – for example, teaching and learning plans, academic plans, investment plans and specific, large scale initiatives including curriculum renewal. This guideline statement reflects the size and complexity of New Zealand universities and their need to respond to multiple pressures and requirements.

Despite this complexity, audit panels also noted the extent to which universities go to engage staff and other stakeholders with their strategic plans. They also noted staff familiarity with the strategic priorities of universities.

Issues relating to decentralisation of decision-making and central oversight to ensure consistency and institutional assurance of quality were also raised with respect to this guideline statement. These comments reflected responsibilities, availability of decentralised data and use of data and KPIs to assess progress. Where use of KPIs was not evident or where KPIs did not appear to be clearly linked to strategy documents, panels suggested that these matters be addressed.

Overall it appears that strategic planning and reporting processes in New Zealand universities are generally well developed and effective, but there are opportunities to make greater and better use of data in some cases. Cycle 6 will place greater emphasis on the use of evidence[4].

Infrastructure

Guideline statement 1.4 indicates "Universities should have strategies and/or use processes for ensuring that their teaching and learning spaces and facilities are appropriate for their teaching and learning needs". Three affirmations for this guideline statement suggest that it was an area of current activity for universities during their Cycle 5 academic audit. Commendations, affirmations and recommendations with respect to this guideline statement are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 GS 1.4 Infrastructure

Commendations	Affirmations
C2 The Panel **commends** the University on its systematic, evidence-based, internationally benchmarked approach to learning space design, on its consultative processes, on its identification and replication of effective space utilisation and design principles and for its initiatives to assist students with technological needs. (AUT)	A2 The Panel **affirms** the University's processes for planning development of teaching and learning spaces, in particular its efforts to ensure that spaces are aligned with pedagogical developments which reflect the University's distinctive character as well as with capital planning and financial allocation. (MU)
Recommendation	
R2 The Panel **recommends** that in order to provide a high-quality learning and teaching environment across the institution, the University gives urgent attention to implementing a coherent strategy to develop digital technologies and to promote and support staff use of these, including prioritising and developing timelines for the Actions outlined in Section 6 of the 2013-2016 Learning and Teaching Plan. (AU)	A1 The Panel **affirms** the University's efforts to improve integration of the four Wellington sites in terms of providing physical environments and facilities which are comparable but also address discipline-specific needs. (VUW)
R3 The Panel **recommends** that the University explore how it might make more effective use of knowledge about current best practice and emerging innovative pedagogies in a systematic way to ensure infrastructure planning, development and refurbishment is directed by current and anticipated teaching and learning practices. (WU)	A1 The Panel **affirms** the development of the Student Desktop and considers that, with fine-tuning, it will offer considerable benefit for students. (OU)

The commendation and one of the affirmations reflect good planning processes, consistent with those examined with respect to GS 1.2. The other 2 affirmations endorse specific, large-scale infrastructure initiatives underway at the times of the audits. One of the recommendations reflects the need for strategic coherence discussed previously, while the other encourages the university to connect pedagogical knowledge and developments to its infrastructure planning.

Other comments from the full text of the audit reports emphasise the importance of pedagogy informing infrastructure development and important connections between pedagogy, technology and infrastructure developments. The audit reports for the three South Island universities comment on the ongoing impact of earthquakes and the major infrastructure developments as a consequence of these. Most universities have campus development plans and regularly monitor space usage and adequacy.

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[4] http://www.aqa.ac.nz/node/271

Other good practices identified in audit reports include seeking student and other user input into campus planning and infrastructural development activities and post-implementation reviews.

The affirmations made with respect to GS 1.4 highlight the levels of change that universities, and their students and staff, were experiencing over the period of the Cycle 5 academic audit. Recommendations also reflect change, particularly in terms of technological development and the need for universities to both ensure that these developments are informed by pedagogy and to support staff to adapt to new teaching and learning environments.

Information resources

Commendations and recommendations for GS 1.5 "Universities should use processes for ensuring that their information resources are appropriate and sufficient for research-informed teaching and learning" are presented in Table 4. In considering this guideline statement, universities and audit panels considered both library resources and services and digital learning. Library resources and services attracted commendations while recommendations were made for digital learning.

Table 4 GS 1.5 Information resources

Commendations	Recommendations
C3 The Panel **commends** the University for continuing to provide exceptionally good quality libraries and learning services to staff and students, including provision of a wide range of resources and expertise to support teaching, learning and research. (AU)	R4 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews its processes for decision making around provision of digital learning support to ensure that teaching enhancements are in line with the University's objectives, including those of the Curriculum Enhancement Programme. Strong encouragement should be given to academic staff to avail themselves of the expertise available within the Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning. (WU)
C1 The Panel **commends** the University on the success of the new (2011) Student Centre, incorporating the Library and student learning space, and of the systematic ongoing evaluation of Library usage. (WU)	
	R1 The Panel **recommends** that the University gives priority to the systematic implementation of the Action Plan within its Vision and Strategy for Digital Learning and Teaching at Victoria 2012–2017, including development of feasible timelines, responsibilities and target objectives or stages. (VUW)
C1 The Panel **commends** the Library for continuing to provide the excellent level of service which earned it a commendation in the previous 2008 academic audit. (MU)	
C1 The Panel **commends** Library, Teaching and Learning (LTL) for its leadership in developing and managing new systems to support staff and students, and encourages LTL to augment its monitoring of the impacts of such initiatives. (LU)	R3 The Panel **recommends** that the University develops and implements its e-learning strategy, including benchmarking against relevant good practices in resourcing and back-up in comparable universities in New Zealand and elsewhere. (UC)
	R2 The Panel **recommends** that the University urgently address its reliance on a single MySQL database and the lack of a specialist MySQL administrator to ensure adequate protection against the risk of failure of the system. (UC)

Commendations with respect to this guideline statement centre on library services and services associated with or provided by university libraries. They reflect the strategic role and central contribution that libraries make to supporting student learning and their wider experience. From the full-text of audit reports, it would appear that the factors that lead to libraries being commended include high levels of interconnection and engagement between libraries and university teaching and learning committees. This includes library staff being involved in strategic development and sitting on both university and faculty teaching committees (or equivalents). Participation in benchmarking may

also be a contributing factor. These features are also present in other universities, although in some cases perhaps not as well developed. No recommendations made with respect to this guideline statement related to libraries.

Rather, recommendations concern the implementation of digital or e-learning initiatives and a specific issue identified by an audit panel. Further comment, in the full text of audit reports, suggests that challenges in providing leadership, multiplicity of digital learning support platforms and the need to progress strategy implementation at greater rates contribute to these recommendations.

Risk management

The final guideline statement in this academic activity theme indicates "Universities should have recovery plans and procedures which are designed to facilitate continuity of teaching and learning in instances of infrastructure system failure".   The pattern of commendations, affirmations and recommendations for this guideline statement suggests that it is an active area for universities (Table 5).

Table 5 GS 1.6 Risk management

Commendations	Affirmations
C2 The Panel **commends** the University on its comprehensive and effective emergency management provisions and its clear definition of business continuity expectations and encourages the University to continue its efforts to ensure these are communicated well to both staff and students as appropriate. (MU) C2 The Panel **commends** the University on developing, implementing and evaluating risk management and business continuity procedures; on the effectiveness of these in the circumstances resulting from the 2010 and 2011 Christchurch earthquakes; on the commitment and fortitude demonstrated by staff and students to pursuing their teaching, learning and research; and on the leadership shown by the University both regionally and nationally in sharing good practice and lessons learned from their experiences. (UC)	A2 The Panel **affirms** the University's planning and risk management procedures for mitigation of the effects of a disaster, crisis or significant infrastructure failure at an institutional level, and urges the University to give priority to finalising the proposed Teaching and Learning Continuity Plan and communicating this to all staff and, as appropriate, to students. (AU) A1 The Panel **affirms** the University's developing risk management and business continuity processes, which are proportionate to the nature of likely risk events, and encourages the University to continue building capability in infrastructure, personal and academic responses. (WU) A2 The Panel **affirms** the University's work in preparing for the management of a significant disruption to its activities, and for steps taken to facilitate business continuity. It endorses the maintenance of an off-site back-up data centre. (VUW)
Recommendation	
R1 The Panel **recommends** that the University gives priority to the identification of risk events which might impede teaching, learning, research and associated academic activities over an extended period and ensures that plans are in place, and procedures in place or available, to expedite business continuity of all core activities. (AUT)	A2 The Panel **affirms** the ongoing work of the University in managing its responses to space constraints consequent to earthquake damage, demolition and remediation. (LU)

Commendations and affirmations with respect to this guideline statement recognise significant work by universities in addressing risk. University risk management includes planning for a range of risks and events (including, but not limited to, natural disasters, weather events, major power outages, personal risks, pandemics, biosecurity, risks to student safety from behavior, and in some cases emergent risks such as cyber bullying). Plans include emergency, incident and crisis plans and business continuity, resilience and recovery plans. Alternative crisis management centres and secondary data centres are in place. Plans are tested through desk-top exercises, practical exercises (scenarios) and actual events (live

tests). Three universities host national centres for disaster management, biosecurity and risk, resilience and renewal.

This guideline statement particularly considered the continuity of teaching and learning. Universities address this through specific plans (including those at faculty and department level), having multiple campuses and locations where teaching can continue, provision for student welfare centres, provisioning of student residential facilities, use of digital and online teaching and other cloud solutions. Tests of these systems have occurred through natural disasters, extreme weather events and major power outages and hoax threats.

Universities have gained significant experience of managing risks to continuity of teaching and learning and are continuing to develop their capability to manage risk.

Student Profile: Access, Admission and Transition Processes

Academic activity theme 2 of the Cycle 5 audit framework examined student access, admission and transition processes with three guideline statements:

GS 2.1 Admission and selection,
GS 2.2 Access and transition, and
GS 2.3 Academic advice.

The frequencies of commendations, affirmations and recommendations for guideline statements in this theme are presented in Figure 4. GS 2.1 "Universities' admission and selection policies and practices should be clear and publicly available to students" falls below the thresholds for further analysis and is not considered further in this paper.
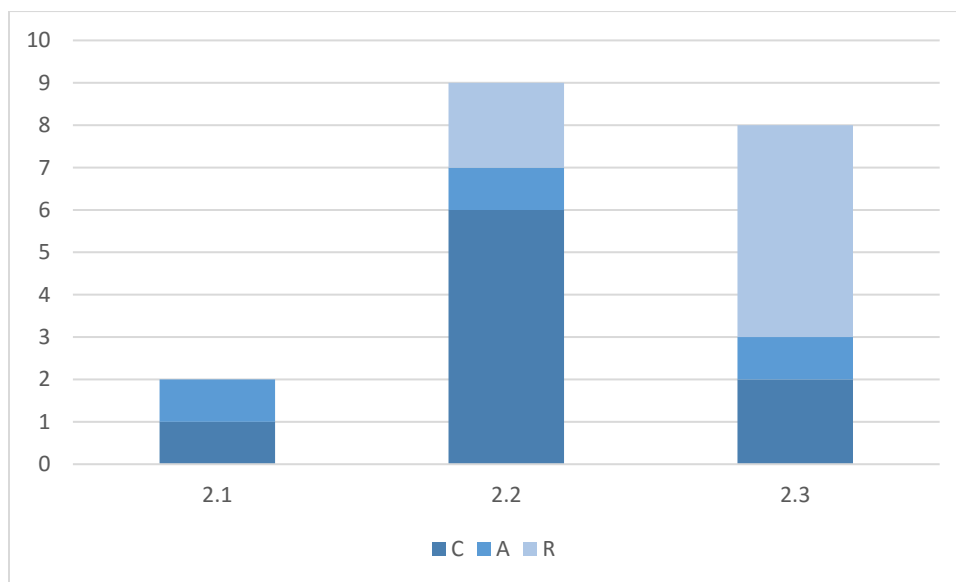

Figure 4 Student profile: access, admission and transition processes

Access and transition

Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for GS 2.2 "Universities should use policies and/or procedures which are designed to assist the access and transition of equity groups or other priority groups" are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 GS 2.2 Access and transition

Commendations	Affirmations
C4 The Panel **commends** the University on its long-standing comprehensive, systematic and informed approach to encouraging the access and transition of Māori and Pacific students to University, including the UTAS[5] provision, clear communication of admission requirements and wide range of activities to support transition at both institutional and faculty level. (AU)	A2 The Panel **affirms** the consolidated approach to transition that the University is taking with the establishment of the Director, First-Year Experience position and committee. (OU)
C3 The Panel **commends** the University for its South Campus initiative and, in particular, on the University's success in recruiting and supporting Pacific students and endeavouring to ensure that the opportunities available for Māori and Pacific students are not unfairly constrained by location, affordability or educational inexperience. (AUT)	**Recommendations**
C5 The Panel **commends** the University on the translation of the University's commitment to its Treaty obligations into actions which support its equity objectives with respect to Māori, and on the embeddedness of mechanisms and activities to support Māori student recruitment, retention and achievement. (VUW)	R4 The Panel **recommends** that the University gives consideration to the development of strategies and, where appropriate, KPIs and the provision of appropriate resources to enhance its recruitment of Māori, Pasifika and other underrepresented groups. (UC)
C6 The Panel **commends** the University on its commitment to Pasifika student recruitment, retention and achievement, and in particular on the Wainuiomata Pasifika Education Success Initiative and the introduction of distinctive spaces, services and programmes to support Pasifika students once enrolled. (VUW)	R5 The Panel **recommends** the University proceeds with development and operationalisation of the Motu Strategy and in particular explores how enrolment of domestic Pasifika students might be encouraged and their participation supported. (LU)
C3 The Panel **commends** the University on the success of its Whenua Kura and Poutama Whenua initiatives and the contribution made by these programmes to facilitating Māori student participation in tertiary study. (LU)	
C5 The Panel **commends** the University for its strong emphasis on student transition, including the relationship with residential colleges, and the range of programmes and processes for equity and other priority groups. (OU)	

Most of the commendations reference universities' work on access and transition for Māori students and also Pacific students. The two recommendations suggest further development of strategies and plans for Māori students and for Pacific students. Despite the commonality of the guideline statement, the commendations cover a range of approaches and initiatives from overarching approaches (AU, VUW and OU) to significant campus developments (AUT) to specific initiatives (LU).

All universities identify Māori students and Pacific students among their priority groups of students; and audit reports indicate that the majority of universities have specific objectives, strategies and initiatives for recruitment and transition. Universities also identify other priority groups of students including those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and low-decile schools, international students, high-calibre students, students with disabilities, refugees, new migrants and mature students,

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[5] Undergraduate Targeted Admission Schemes

among others. However, most of the comments in audit reports are focused on Māori students and Pacific students.

Further comments on access in the full-text of audit reports includes recruitment and outreach activities and transition activities. These activities are targeted and specific to different groups of students and approaches for Māori students are distinct and differentiated from approaches for Pacific students. Examples of good practice in audit reports include community and iwi relationships, building relationships with students before they come to university, emphasis on the first-year experience, designated and culturally appropriate spaces, dedicated residential options, and mentoring and buddy systems.   Many more initiatives and practices are commented on in the audit reports, including campus developments such as the AUT's south campus.

A particular issue is that of access to limited entry programmes. This does not apply to all universities, but where it does universities have both high-level policy and strategy settings and specific initiatives to address equity issues and improve access for students belonging to priority groups. Universities are also alert to and addressing the risk that students admitted to limited entry programmes through equity/priority pathways may face additional issues including academic preparations and senses of belonging or becoming 'ring-fenced' through targeted support and other activities.

The strategic framing of these activities varies among universities, but most appear to be guided by a strategic priority or imperative. Where this linkage was not apparent to an audit panel, it has recommended that it be established.

Overall, the balance of commendations for this guideline statement suggests that universities do have appropriate strategies and effective initiatives in place to increase participation and improve transition for Māori students and for Pacific students. Audit reports note that universities assess effectiveness through indicators such as student satisfaction, proportion of students passing two-thirds of academic credits, as well as course and qualification completion numbers and rates. In some cases, audit panels have noted that more systematic evaluation of activities and initiatives would be beneficial. Universities have recognised that further progress is necessary and access to university for Māori students and for Pacific students is a component of the enhancement theme introduced into Cycle 6 Academic Audit[6].

Academic advice

There is almost the reverse pattern of commendations, affirmations and recommendations for GS 2.3 "Universities should use processes for providing academic advice and course information to both new and continuing students" (Table 7). Whereas the balance of commendations, affirmations and recommendations for GS 2.2 was towards commendations, there are more recommendations for GS 2.3.

Table 7 GS 2.3 Academic advice

Recommendations	Affirmations
R3 The Panel **recommends** that as part of the FAR[7] project the University ensures it establishes formal protocols for the provision of advice to students about academic matters, including defining which staff have authority to give advice about matters	A1 The Panel **affirms** the introduction of a new student management system and encourages the University to consider

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[6] http://www.aqa.ac.nz/node/273
[7] Faculty Administration Review

which require specific decisions. (AU) R2 The Panel *recommends* that the University reviews its systems for giving, recording and reviewing academic advice to students; and that the University considers formulating a policy and procedures for academic advising which addresses responsibilities for giving advice, recording advice and follow-up of advice where relevant. (AUT) R2 The Panel **recommends** that as part of its overall monitoring of the effectiveness of the shared service model of student advice and information, the University engages College staff in exploring how perceived difficulties with the model might be overcome and, in particular, how to resolve the perceived disadvantages of distancing academic advice from those providing the academic service. (MU) R2 The Panel **recommends** the University give priority to completing the Course Information Project and the review of academic advice in order to enhance the quality, reliability and consistency of academic advising across the University. (VUW) R2 The Panel **recommends** that the University progress its intentions to review course advice as a matter of urgency. (OU)	the issues related to student advice when designing the new system. (UC)
	Commendations
	C5 The Panel **commends** the University on its "AskAuckland" website and mobile app, the usability of these, and on the development of a comprehensive database to underpin them. (AU) C4 The Panel **commends** the University on its promotion of an "Open Door" culture and on the accessibility of academic staff to students in need of advice or support. (LU)

Recommendations regarding academic advice reflect an interaction between policy settings and student management systems and other changes following from major reviews. These impact on the ways in which academic advice is provided, necessitating attention being given to how and by whom such advice may be given. At the time of their audits, a number of universities were in the process of, or had recently implemented, an upgrade to their student management systems. Recommendations include how universities can, or might, utilise increasingly advanced features of student management systems to provide course advice.

Other issues raised in audit reports were:
- Differentiating between information and advice, with a clear distinction that advice is binding and that universities need to ensure it is of consistently high quality.
- Provision for redressing poor or inadequate advice.
- That course advice is treated as a strategic issue and that universities seek student feedback on satisfaction.
- Heightened challenges with consistency of advice for double, conjoint and interdisciplinary qualifications.
- Tailored information and use of multiple channels for new students, but less sense of multiple channels for continuing students.

The UNZ Committee on Student Administration and Academic Services (CSAAS) has recognised the importance of and the opportunity to enhance course advice and has initiated work on this topic. There are likely to be further implications as this work develops.

Curriculum and Assessment

Academic activity theme 3 is one of the larger themes in the Cycle 5 audit framework with nine guideline statements addressing:

GS 3.1 Programme approval,
GS 3.2 Graduate attributes,
GS 3.3 Graduate outcomes,
GS 3.4 Programme review,
GS 3.5 Benchmarking,
GS 3.6 Assessment,
GS 3.7 Equivalence of learning outcomes,
GS 3.8 Academic misconduct, and
GS 3.9 Assessment in te reo Māori.

Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for these guideline statements are presented in Figure 5. There is a higher proportion of recommendations among the commendations, affirmations and recommendations made by audit panels in this theme, suggesting that this is an area for further development. Five guideline statements are examined further below.

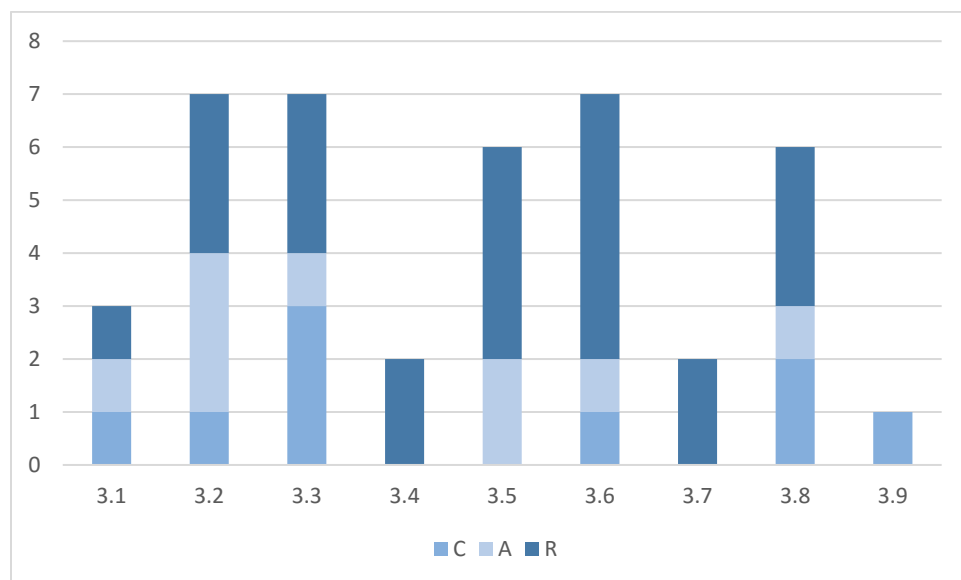*Figure 5 Curriculum and assessment*

Graduate attributes

GS 3.2 indicates that "Universities should have clearly-defined intended graduate outcomes (graduate attributes) which are publicly available and are accessible to students and staff". The pattern of commendations, affirmations and recommendations for this guideline statement (Table 8) suggests that this was an active area for universities in Cycle 5.

Affirmations	Recommendations
A1 The Panel **affirms** the University's development of an institutional Graduate Profile and encourages it to expedite the application of this model to all qualifications and majors in a manner which will be easily understood by students and stakeholders (AUT)	R4 The Panel **recommends** that the University review its current institutional Graduate Profile and revise as appropriate to reflect its contemporary aspirations for its graduates. The University should endeavour to ensure that attributes from the institutional Graduate Profile are reflected in graduate profiles for individual programmes where appropriate. (AU)
A2 The Panel **affirms** the University's attention to the development of institutional graduate attributes and encourages it to expedite the process of reaching a conclusion such that a clear Graduate Profile can be articulated and communicated to staff, students and the community and used as a basis for curriculum initiatives. (WU)	R3 The Panel **recommends** that the University completes the work on graduate attributes of qualifications and specialisations and that it considers stating formally an institutional graduate profile which reflects its strategic aspirations and which should be reflected in the attributes and outcomes of qualifications and specialisations. (MU)
A3 The Panel **affirms** the progress made on the Qualifications Reform and encourages the University to keep under review the effectiveness of the changes in meeting the reform objectives while at the same time ensuring that student pathways are not unduly constrained. (LU)	R6 The Panel **recommends** that the University assess how best to implement the aspects of the Whenua matrix which pertain to programme content and pedagogy, recognising the particularities of programmes and capability of staff. (LU)
Commendations	
C6 The Panel **commends** the University for its development of University graduate profiles and for its systems and processes to embed the attributes from those profiles into curricula. (OU)	

Two levels of graduate profiles feature in the commendations, affirmations and recommendations for this guideline statement. At one level, panels affirmed or recommended work on institutional level graduate profiles; and at the other level they commented on graduate profiles for qualifications. In both cases however, they made reference to articulation of graduate profiles and embedding attributes within curricula.

Further comment in the full-text of audit reports refers to the alignment between institutional and qualification graduate profiles. Development process for institutional graduate profiles appears to differ between universities, with some reflecting a bottom up approach and others top down.

The development of a top down approach to an institutional graduate profile may reflect another point of connection or alignment for graduate profiles. Audit panels commented on the connection between university strategic direction (and/or initiatives) and institutional graduate profiles and, in some cases, suggest that institutional graduate profiles can articulate the distinctiveness of graduates from particular universities.

Universities employ a range of mechanisms to ensure that graduate attributes are embedded in curricula. These include some highly structured approaches such as learning and teaching plans, large scale curriculum reform and redevelopment, programme reviews and curriculum mapping exercises. Where panels considered that mechanisms for embedding graduate attributes were unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes, they commented to that effect.

Audit reports also comment on the visibility and awareness of graduate profiles, particularly among students. Universities employ a range of mechanisms to increase the awareness of graduate profiles, particularly institutional profiles. They include involving students in the development of the graduate

profile, producing visual/diagrammatic guides and overarching frameworks, making graduate profiles available on websites, and providing students with a copy of the graduate profile.

Graduate outcomes

GS 3.3 "Universities should have processes for ensuring students have the opportunity to meet the intended graduate outcomes (graduate attributes) during their period of study" is closely related to the graduate attributes guideline statement above. Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for this guideline statement (Table 9) also reflect institutional graduate profiles and embedding attributes in curricula. Commendations and affirmations further reflect specific mechanisms for graduates to acquire attributes and engagement with students and employers on the attainment of attributes.

Table 9 GS 3.3 Graduate outcomes

Commendations	Recommendations
C5 The Panel **commends** the University on the success of its determination to ensure a high proportion of students have the opportunity for work-integrated learning, on the commitment of staff to this and on the strong endorsement by students of its value to their learning. (AUT)	R5 The Panel **recommends** that the University develops its work programme beyond the Actions set out under "Student Employment Outcomes" in the Learning and Teaching Plan 2013-2016, to give explicit recognition to the development of work-readiness through the delivery of the curriculum, in particular in non-professional programmes. (AU)
C7 The Panel **commends** the University's work in developing its new Graduate Profile, the consultation with both staff and students which underpins the development, the manner in which the connections between the Profile, graduate attributes and graduate outcomes are being mapped from course level to institutional level and the opportunities which are being provided to enable students to acquire cocurricular attributes. (VUW)	R5 The Panel **recommends** that as part of the Curriculum Enhancement Programme the University provides appropriate professional development opportunities to assist staff in providing students with learning activities which will facilitate the acquisition of attributes in the Graduate Profile, and in using modes of assessment whereby the University can assure itself the Graduate Profile is achieved. (WU)
C7 The Panel **commends** the University for its efforts to seek and use feedback from graduates and employers on the attainment of graduate attributes. (OU)	R5 The Panel **recommends** that in order to achieve institution-wide integration of the new Graduate Profile in all programmes, and to enable future students to achieve the graduate attributes, the University considers the areas where the Panel has expressed concern and urgently gives attention to the planning, resourcing and high-level oversight for the project. (UC)
Affirmations	
A3 The Panel **affirms** the University's development of e-portfolios as a tool for students to record and evaluate their own progress towards acquiring graduate attributes, and supports the University's efforts to encourage academic staff to incorporate use of e-portfolios into their teaching and learning approaches. (VUW)	

The attainment of graduate attributes needs to be a structured, planned and evaluated process. Audit reports comment further on developing systems to evaluate whether the university's processes for enabling students to attain graduate attributes are effective, and support that might be provided to teaching staff to embed attributes.

Recommendations and audit reports also comment further on attributes related to employability and work-readiness of graduates. Mechanisms and initiatives to support work-readiness include work-integrated- learning options, internships, volunteering programmes, practitioner involvement in

teaching, links to professional practice, non-credit bearing courses, extra- and co-curricular activities, transcripts and awards, and e-portfolios.

Benchmarking programmes

GS 3.5 indicates "Universities should use processes for benchmarking curriculum and assessment standards to ensure they are nationally and internationally appropriate". While audit panels did comment on good practice with respect to this guideline statement, no commendations were made in Cycle 5. Affirmations and recommendations are set out in Table 10, suggesting that this is another area of active development for universities. Affirmations and recommendations address purpose and principles for benchmarking, guidance and support for benchmarking activities and specific benchmarking initiatives.

Table 10 GS 3.5 Benchmarking programmes

Affirmations	Recommendations
A2 The Panel **affirms** the University's proactive participation in international academic benchmarking initiatives and encourages the University to develop more explicit guidance for faculties and programmes, especially around benchmarking of assessment and learning outcomes. (AUT)	R6 The Panel **recommends** that the University revisits the 2010 benchmarking report and develops appropriate institutional benchmarking principles which encompass, *inter alia:* academic activities to be benchmarked; for what purpose; identification of relevant comparator institutions and procedures; avenues or responsibility for translating relevant good practices identified into local developments. (WU) R4 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews the ways in which staff ensure undergraduate and taught postgraduate programme curricula and assessment are benchmarked to national and international expectations, and endeavours to develop University-wide guidelines on programme benchmarking which take account of the different requirements for professional and other disciplines. (MU)
A3 The Panel **affirms** the University's development of the Matariki Network of Universities and considers that it offers considerable potential for benchmarking, opportunities for students and staff, and other organisational learning. (OU)	R3 The Panel **recommends** that the University develops a high-level benchmarking statement which sets out the objectives and potential strategies whereby staff might assure themselves that programmes, curricula and assessment are benchmarked to prevailing national and international standards. (VUW) R6 The Panel **recommends** that the University articulates a statement of purpose or philosophy of benchmarking for curriculum and assessment; develops a strategy for implementation of benchmarking which includes guidelines as to how the University might make good use of both quantitative and qualitative benchmarked data to reinforce good practice; and explores additional benchmarking partners which might be useful comparators for the strategic initiatives on which the University is embarking. (UC)

Audit reports differentiate between systematic benchmarking practices, such as international accreditation exercises and participation in externally referenced surveys; and informal approaches, such as staff having experience of other universities. While all universities can demonstrate activities which contribute to benchmarking, in a number of cases panels have recommended that these be systematised and guided by explicit university objectives with respect to benchmarking.

Audit panels also commented on progress on recommendations made with respect to benchmarking in Cycle 4 academic audit reports and, in some cases, considered that progress was slower or less than it should have been. A lack of a systematic approach was commented on for a number of universities. Other issues identified with respect to benchmarking programmes include the availability (or perceived unavailability) of appropriate comparator institutions. AQA has previously commented on the increase in attention being paid to benchmarking, through external referencing, of outcome standards in other

jurisdictions (Matear, 2016).   It seems likely that this will be an ongoing area of development for New Zealand universities. The "Higher Education Pacific Quality Benchmarking Project 2017" Booth (2018) provides an example of further academic quality benchmarking initiatives.

Features of better developed approaches to benchmarking include the clear identification of (groups of) institutions against which to benchmark and the existence of a benchmarking framework.

Assessment

GS 3.6 "Universities should use documented procedures for monitoring and moderating assessment processes and standards" is another active area for a group of universities. Commendations, affirmations and recommendations are presented in Table 11.

Table 11 GS 3.6 Assessment

Commendations	Recommendations
C8 The Panel **commends** the University on its suite of academic handbooks which comprehensively and clearly set out expectations and requirements for programme development, approval and review and for assessment, thereby forming a set of guidelines for all staff. This commendation refers to the Programme and Course Design Handbook, the Academic Approvals Handbook, the Evaluation and Review Handbook, the Assessment Handbook and the Quality and Management Framework for Student Learning which provides the overarching approach to ensuring academic quality. (VUW)	R5 The Panel **recommends** that the University as a matter of urgency undertakes an assessment of grading practices across the University with an objective of removing inconsistency in grading practices both within and between Colleges and ensuring equivalence of marks and grades between different programmes. (MU)
	R6 The Panel **recommends** that the University investigates practices related to consideration of aegrotat applications, including defining responsibility for recommendations and decisions, communicating expectations to staff and students and undertaking an analysis of aegrotat outcomes. (MU)
	R4 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews the mechanisms used by staff to moderate undergraduate assessment tasks, expectations and standards with an objective of identifying, developing and sharing good practice and formulating some principles for moderation. (VUW)
Affirmations	R7 The Panel **recommends** that the University develops a policy on moderation expectations and establishes agreed guidelines to apply across the institution. (UC)
A5 The Panel **affirms** the University's Assessment Strategy, Principles and Guidelines and encourages the University to explore strategies to enhance staff awareness and understanding of the principles and expectations and ensure that implementation is appropriately monitored. (MU)	R8 The Panel **recommends** that, in its revision of the Assessment Policy and its development of the Fourth Learning and Teaching Strategic Directions, the University address all forms of assessment (not only exams) and gives greater clarification to the expectations of academic staff regarding such matters as use of grading rubrics, criterion-referencing, pre- and post-assessment moderation and formative feedback to students. (LU)

The commendation and affirmation relate to overarching approaches and guidelines for assessment. The need for an overall approach, policy, and guidance for assessment, both generally and for particular aspects (moderation), also features in recommendations. A further recommendation concerned specific practices for consideration of aegrotat applications.

From the full-text of audit reports it appears that university approaches to assessment are comprehensive and address assessment design aspects including pre- and post-moderation of assessment, grade distributions, rubrics, forms of assessment and alignment with learning outcomes; as well as assessment management issues such as late submission, academic honesty, aegrotats and responsibilities for decisions and confirmation of marks. Audit reports include outlines of how assessment is managed in universities. In some cases, panels commented on the opportunity to make

information about the purpose(s) and principles of assessment more widely (or easily) available, especially for students, and the need to be cogniscent of how assessment expectations are changing for new groups of learners.

Academic misconduct

Guideline statement 3.8 addresses academic misconduct, stating that "Universities should use procedures for addressing academic misconduct, including plagiarism and other forms of cheating". Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for the guideline statement are presented in Table 12. These refer to both overarching approaches and frameworks and specific mechanisms (use of plagiarism detection software, confidential recording of proven allegations) for managing academic integrity and dishonesty. They also make reference to the importance of educative approaches and resources.

Table 12 GS 3.8 Academic misconduct

Commendations	Recommendations
The Panel **commends** the University on the introduction of a mandatory academic integrity course and on its initiative in making this available for open access. (UA) C6 The Panel **commends** the University on its comprehensive and coordinated approach to addressing academic integrity through educative, regulatory and experiential activities and documents for both staff and students. (AUT)	R8 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews its guidelines for the use of Turnitin plagiarism detection software and other electronic forms of detection to ensure staff and students receive and use consistent information and experience consistent use of the detection procedures. Guidelines should include an outline of the scope of use, procedures to be followed and the information to be conveyed to students about application of Turnitin to the assessment in particular papers. (MU) R6 The Panel **recommends** that the University gives priority to its Enhancement Initiative No. 7, to develop an academic integrity strategy which addresses, in a systematic way, prevention, detection and management of academic misconduct and which includes the development of good practice examples of academic integrity education and identification of good assessment practices which minimise opportunity for plagiarism. (VUW)
Affirmations	
A3 The Panel **affirms** the University's reconsideration of approaches to promoting academic integrity and managing dishonesty. It supports the intention to develop a mandatory module within all undergraduate programmes, as part of the Curriculum Enhancement initiative. (WU)	R9 The Panel **recommends** that the University give priority to reviewing its policies and processes for preventing and managing academic dishonesty, that it consider mechanisms for ensuring proven dishonesty allegations are recorded confidentially, and that it also consider developing educative resources for both staff and students to ensure academic integrity in teaching, learning, assessment and research. (LU)

Audit reports provide more detail on the educative approaches to academic integrity being undertaken by universities. They set out the drivers for such an approach and outline the content of the approaches. Universities with a detection/punishment approach to academic integrity were encouraged to adopt a more educative approach and promote a culture of academic integrity. Other components of universities' approaches to academic integrity include membership of international fora. Plagiarism continues to be a dominant theme, but universities also address other forms of academic fraud and dishonesty; although audit reports make less comment on other forms. Audit reports also comment on reporting and recording requirements, and how universities address issues associated with multi-disciplinary programmes of study.

Student Engagement and Achievement

Academic activity theme 4 of the Cycle 5 audit framework considered student engagement and achievement with five guideline statements:

GS 4.1 Student engagement,
GS 4.2 Retention and completion,
GS 4.3 Feedback to students,
GS 4.4 Under-achieving students, and
GS 4.5 High-achieving students.

Frequencies of commendations, affirmations and recommendations for guideline statements in this theme are presented in Figure 6. However, none of the guideline statements in this theme attracted six or more commendations, affirmations or recommendations in total. Again, this could have been influenced by the lack of students as members of audit panels. The two guideline statements which did attract more commendations, affirmations or recommendations show a pattern suggestive of good practice and work-in-progress. The commendations, affirmations and recommendations for these guideline statements are included in the appendix and no further comment is made in this paper.
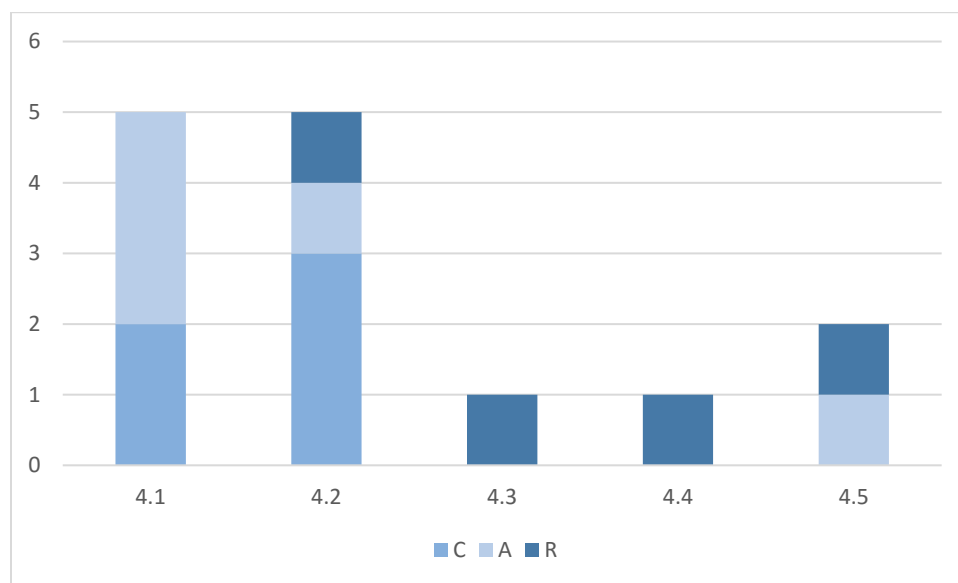

Figure 6 Student engagement and achievement

Student Feedback and Support

Academic activity theme 5 considered student feedback and support through six guideline statements:

GS 5.1 Academic appeals and grievances,
GS 5.2 Learning support,
GS 5.3 Personal support and safety,
GS 5.4 Support on other campuses,
GS 5.5 Feedback from students, and
GS 5.6 Feedback from graduates.

Similar to theme 4 above, no guideline statements in this theme attracted 6 or more commendations, affirmations or recommendations in total (Figure 7). However, four commendations were made for GS 5.2 (Learning support) and 5.5 (Feedback from students). These are examined further below.
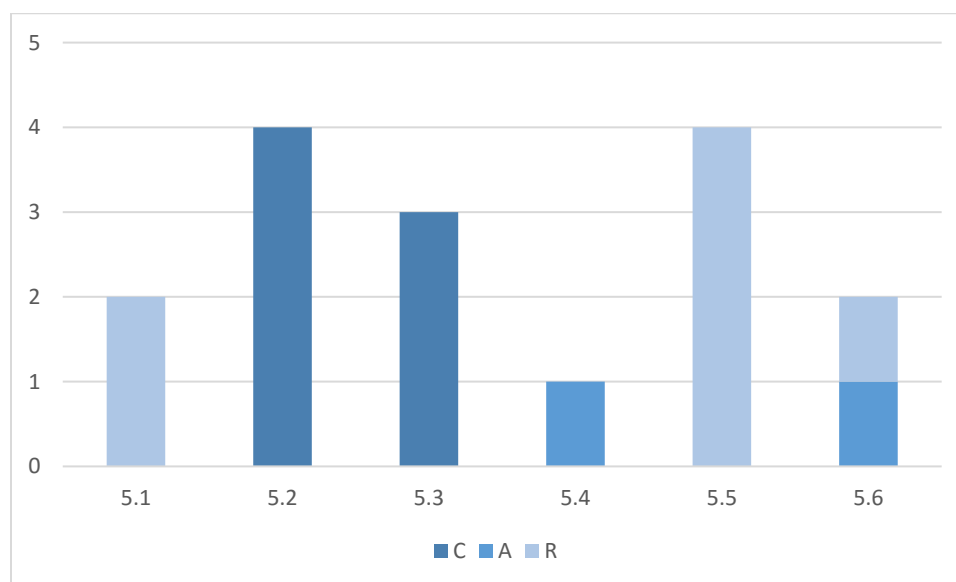

Figure 7 Student feedback and support

Learning support

Four commendations (Table 13) for GS 5.2 "Universities should provide opportunity for all students to access appropriate learning support services, including specialised learning support services for international students and others with particular needs" suggest this is an area of established good practice for universities. Commendations cover the comprehensive nature of support and specific services.

Table 13 GS 5.2 Learning support

Commendations
C8 The Panel **commends** the University on its comprehensive and well-coordinated approach to identification of student learning support need, on the provision of appropriate support and ensuring opportunity to access it is maximised, and in particular on the work of the Student Experience Team. (AUT)
C9 The Panel **commends** the University for its significant effort in endeavouring to provide an inclusive and safe campus for all students and staff. (AUT)
C3 The Panel **commends** the University on its extensive range of learning support services across campuses, which are valued by students, and in particular commends the pre-reading service initiative, the services provided by the Library and the Centres for Teaching and Learning and the attention being paid to support for Māori and Pasifika students. The Panel also notes the University's initiatives which enable students to support each other and its efforts to improve services, focusing on support provided in different modes (e.g. face-to-face, online and virtual). (MU)
C4 The Panel **commends** the University on its learning and academic skills support services, their accessibility and acceptability to students and on the initiative taken by staff to ensure relevance and effectiveness. (UC)

C5 The Panel **commends** the work of Library, Teaching and Learning in providing support for students and in particular for its coordination and oversight of the PASS[8] programme. (LU)

Expanding on the comprehensive availability of learning support, the full-text of audit reports outline the sorts of support which are available. They include centrally provided learning support, support within faculties and support targeted to particular groups of students. The audit reports also comment on the forms and modes that support is provided in – face-to-face, online (synchronous and online resources), by specialists and by peers, spaces and places including halls of residence, and how support is initiated (by students or staff from triggers such as not logging into the learning management system or not submitting internal assessment, or through diagnostic assessment).

For some universities, audit reports make reference to learning support being research-led and informed by evidence and data. Universities monitor use of learning support services and seek feedback on student satisfaction with these services. In some cases, audit reports noted that universities had undertaken specific reviews and/or evaluations of the effectiveness of learning support services, and other reviews to ensure sustainability and equity of access.

Although most of the comment in the full text of the audit reports is positive, panels did identify opportunities for further improvement. These included being able to identify students who would benefit from support earlier in their studies and connect them with appropriate services and better communicating the range of services available.

Feedback from students

In contrast to the above guideline statement, GS 5.5 "Universities should use processes for gaining feedback on student satisfaction with teaching, courses and student services and should be able to demonstrate that feedback is used to inform improvement initiatives", received four recommendations (Table 14), suggesting this is an area where further development is required.

Table 14 GS 5.5 Feedback from students

Recommendations
R8 The Panel **recommends** that the University continues to review processes around data-gathering on student experiences and solicits ideas from all university groups (staff and students) about how feedback can be improved such that the basis of decision-making might be enhanced. (WU)
R7 The Panel **recommends** that the University gives urgent attention to implementation of the system initiated in 2014 to require course outlines to include feedback to students regarding the outcomes and actions taken as a consequence of responses from course evaluations. (VUW)
R8 The Panel **recommends** that the University expedite the reviews of cross-institutional course and teaching surveys, paying attention to the weaknesses and strengths of the current systems and to prevailing good practice and institutional developments in student surveying both nationally and internationally. (UC)
R5 The Panel **recommends** that the University develop mechanisms for ensuring that students are made aware of changes and improvements that are informed by their feedback. (OU)

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[8] Peer Assisted Study Sessions

The recommendations cover an overall approach to gathering student feedback, specific issues regarding gaps in feedback systems and encouraging efforts to make students aware of the impact of their feedback.

Audit reports outline the range of mechanisms that universities use to gather student feedback. They also set out ways in which student feedback is used, including input to strategic and capital planning, redesign and service improvements. Ways in which universities demonstrate that student feedback has been used ('closing the loop') include website pages and sections in course or paper outlines that articulate changes made to the course or paper as a result of student feedback.

At the time of their Cycle 5 audit, a number of universities were transitioning to, or considering a move to, online systems for seeking student feedback. This was particularly the case for student evaluations of teaching (with most other student surveys having been online for some time). For some universities, low response rates and low cohort sizes were raising concerns about the reliability and representativeness of data. Universities responded that they were triangulating survey data with other forms of evidence.

Teaching Quality

Academic activity theme 6 of the Cycle 5 audit framework considers teaching quality across six guideline statements:

> GS 6.1 Staff recruitment and induction,
> GS 6.2 Research-active staff,
> GS 6.3 Teaching quality,
> GS 6.4 Teaching development,
> 6.5 GS Teaching support on other campuses, and
> GS 6.6 Teaching recognition.

Three guideline statements in this theme had six or more commendations, affirmations and recommendations in total. As can be seen from Figure 8, the balance of these is towards affirmations and recommendations, suggesting that this is also an active area of development. They are examined further below. Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for the other guideline statement in this theme can be found in the Appendix.

Teaching quality has been the subject of previous interest and a thematic note focusing on guideline statements 6.3, 6.4 and 6.6 is available on the AQA website (Matear, 2017). The comments below with respect to guideline statements 6.3 and 6.4 draw on that thematic note.
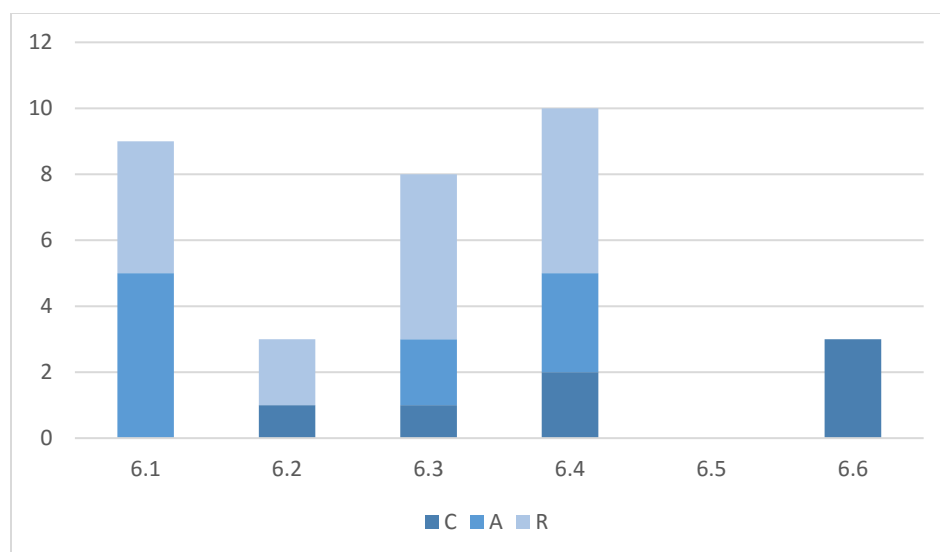
Figure 8 Teaching quality

Staff recruitment and induction

GS 6.1 is "Universities' processes for recruitment and induction should ensure that all teaching staff are appropriately qualified, according to the level(s) at which they will be teaching (i.e., degree level; postgraduate; subdegree) and that all teaching staff receive assistance to become familiar with their university's academic expectations". Affirmations and recommendations for this guideline statement are set out in Table 15.

Table 15 GS 6.1 Staff recruitment and induction

Affirmations	Recommendations
A3 The Panel **affirms** the University's new Academic Standards policy as a defining document to clarify performance and responsibility expectations of academic staff at all levels and for appointment, performance evaluation, continuation and promotion purposes. (UA)	R4 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews its objectives and processes for inducting all new academic staff, whether permanent, fixed-term or casual, and develops a framework which will foster consistent practice across the University, which can be quality assured to ensure new staff all receive relevant advice about academic expectations at the Auckland University of Technology, and receive appropriate guidance to integrate into the University's community. (AUT)
A6 The Panel **affirms** the University's approach to staff induction, including the prearrival advice and online modules and the use of evidence-based resources for new academic staff. (VUW)	
A4 The Panel **affirms** the University's initiative in implementing the RedCarpet online portal for new staff, whereby they may engage with University induction experiences from the time of confirmation of appointment. (UA)	R11 The Panel **recommends** that in reviewing its policies and procedures the Human Resources department ensure there is a clear statement of institutional expectations regarding the academic and general induction of new staff, including contract staff, and develops an induction framework which will foster consistent practice across the University. (LU)
A4 The Panel **affirms** the induction processes for new academic staff and supports continued strengthening and evaluation to ensure fitness for purpose. (UC)	R11 The Panel **recommends** that the University ensures that its induction activities are available and accessible to all staff, in particular ensuring that staff whose home School is based on another campus are adequately provided for. (MU)
A4 The Panel **affirms** the University's introduction of the Leadership and Management Development Programme and encourages the University to incentivise participation by current and prospective academic managers. (WU)	R9 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews the range and usefulness of its formal activities to induct and support academic Heads, strengthening these where necessary and making them compulsory for staff new to the

Affirmations	Recommendations
	role. (UC)

The affirmations and recommendations cover overarching policy positions and expectations for staff across different levels and roles, induction processes and leadership and management development, including for academic heads.

Induction practices vary across universities from compulsory to voluntary, depending on prior experience. They also vary in terms of coverage, start-time and duration and whether they are the responsibility of a central unit or the department or unit the new appointee will be joining. For some universities, all new staff, including roles such as tutors, demonstrators and doctoral scholarship recipients, participate in orientation and induction activities (which may vary depending on role); for others, orientation and induction is limited to staff on certain levels of appointment or by length of appointment. Panels made positive comments and affirmed initiatives in which induction and orientation activities commenced once an offer of employment had been accepted. Where this did not appear to occur, panels suggested it would be good practice to commence orientation and induction activities prior to arrival. Not all audit reports refer to how long an appointee is considered to be new. However, the longest time period mentioned was five years. Where the balance of orientation and induction activities were the responsibility of individual departments or units, panels encouraged greater central university oversight to ensure equity and consistency for new staff.

For a number of universities, recruitment and appointment requirements are linked to academic capability frameworks. These are expressed variously as 'academic standards', 'requirements' and 'competencies' and are linked to strategic priorities.

Audit reports also comment on leadership and management development initiatives, particularly when these did not appear to be required for staff moving into new roles including academic management. Panels encouraged the formalisation of these activities.

Teaching quality

Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for GS 6.3 "Universities should use processes for assessing teaching quality and for monitoring and enhancing individual teaching capability of all teaching staff" are set out in Table 16. They cover staff review processes, including monitoring of individual teaching performance, and processes and approaches for evaluating teaching quality.

Table 16 GS 6.3 Teaching quality

Commendations	Recommendations
C10 The Panel **commends** the University for its staff review processes, including the biennial review of Professorial and Associate Professorial staff and for its promotion of, and support for, a culture of teaching. (OU)	R12 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews the structures and mechanisms available at an institutional level for ensuring: that recruitment and induction policies are followed and outcomes evaluated; that there is central oversight of the fairness and strategic appropriateness of workload management practices; that professional development and review practices are consistent across the University and that outcomes are recorded in ways which facilitate ongoing quality assurance of teaching capability. (UC)
Affirmations	R10 The Panel **recommends** that the University urgently reviews its reporting practice for teaching evaluation results to ensure academic line managers receive performance data and use these to inform the professional development reviews of their individual staff. (WU)
A5 The Panel **affirms** the University's enhancement	

initiative to implement a new course and teaching evaluation system and to produce summary reports for heads of departments. (OU) A5 The Panel **affirms** the University's model for evaluating teaching whereby triangulation is possible from attention to self-reflection, peer assessment and student evaluation. (UA)	R12 The Panel **recommends** that the University ensures that its processes for monitoring individual teaching performance are followed in all cases where teaching is a contractual responsibility. (MU) R10 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews the adequacy of its current teaching surveys for evaluating and documenting teaching quality, explores development of a rubric which defines good teaching and considers how this might be translated into meaningful indicators or measures to enable it to monitor and, where needed, improve the quality of teaching across the University. (UC) R11 The Panel **recommends** that the University considers whether and how peer review might be introduced, encouraged and supported across the University such that it is available for all teaching staff as part of their personal quality assurance regime. (UC)

Audit reports set out institutional frameworks which guide teaching capability and teaching quality. They include annual review and professional development and appraisal processes and performance and planning reviews. Panels were confident that most universities had central oversight over processes for ensuring that teaching quality was monitored and that any concerns or shortfalls were addressed. Panels did however, make recommendations to strengthen institutional oversight.

While universities make considerable use of student evaluations of teaching collected via survey methods, they also stress that multiple forms of evidence are preferred. Issues identified by audit panels include access to teaching evaluations and response rates for teaching evaluations. They commented that it was difficult for managers to support and address concerns around teaching quality when they did not have access to teaching evaluation results. They also noted that universities were taking steps to increase response rates. Audit reports also comment on processes and responsibilities for responding to feedback, including strategies for under-performing staff.

Although the main purpose of evaluating teaching is to improve teaching quality, in most universities evaluations of teaching also contribute to promotions processes. Some audit reports comment on requirements for teaching portfolios as part of promotions applications.

Teaching development

GS 6.4 "Universities should provide opportunities for staff to develop their teaching practice, including application of contemporary pedagogical research, use of learning management systems and use of new technologies" is a further active area for universities. Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for the guideline statement are set out in Table 17.

Table 17 GS 6.4 Teaching development

Commendations	Recommendations
C11 The Panel **commends** the University for its strong commitment to the development of teaching excellence. In particular, the Panel commends the work of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) and the ways in which CAD involves teaching staff in its activities, and for its support of projects to embed new technologies for teaching and learning and to communicate good teaching practice, including support of projects to develop teaching capability, the Ako Victoria conference days and the staff-led VicTeach	R6 The Panel **recommends** the University take advantage of the introduction of the professional learning programme (PLP) initiative to also review the manner in which professional development for teaching is provided across the institution; and that the University develops a plan which will facilitate identification of common development needs, central coordination of appropriate development activities and also provide mechanisms for sharing good practice and innovation. (AUT) R13 The Panel **recommends** that the University addresses

initiative. (VUW) C11 The Panel **commends** the University for its research-led approach to teaching development and for its commitment to project-funding to support innovative teaching. (OU)	institution-wide needs for ongoing professional teaching development, including reviewing the role and staffing capability of the Academic Development Group and ensuring that all academic staff have access to assistance with their curriculum development, teaching, assessment and, if necessary, pedagogical research and pedagogically informed use of IT. (UC)
Affirmations	R13 The Panel **recommends** that the University endeavours to support staff more proactively in the uptake of new teaching technologies, as appropriate to their discipline. (MU)
A3 The Panel **affirms** the University's clear statement of an expectation of staff professional development and an entitlement to time to carry this out. (AUT) A6 The Panel **affirms** the work of CLeaR[9] and the wide range of services it offers to staff and postgraduate students, and in particular the Panel endorses the research ethos underpinning CLeaR's work in developing teaching and learning. (AU) GS6.4 A5 The Panel **affirms** the UC Teaching week and the increased support for staff to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and encourages the University to explore ways of ensuring wider participation by academic staff across all colleges. (UC)	R14 The Panel **recommends** that the University provides consistent and appropriate induction to all staff new to teaching at Massey on the teaching and learning policies, procedures, curriculum design and assessment requirements, modes of delivery and teaching and learning technologies which the University regards as critical in meeting the objectives outlined in The Road to 2020. (MU) R11 The Panel **recommends** that the University provides clear leadership in the development of pedagogical expertise which: is consistent with the University's strategic objectives articulated in the Curriculum Enhancement Programme; facilitates student learning which is aligned with the graduate profile; and which ensures the staffing resources for meeting the professional development needs of teachers are adequate to provide this in a proactive way. (WU)

Commendations reflect a strong commitment to teaching excellence and a research-led approach to teaching development. A research-led ethos is also reflected in affirmations, as are clear expectations regarding professional development and initiatives and activities that support teaching development and teaching excellence. Recommendations can be characterised as:

- Assessing professional development needs,
- Aligning professional development with strategic initiatives,
- Supporting and encouraging uptake of professional development opportunities, including ensuring access to professional development,
- Professional development that addresses new teaching technologies.

In the text in audits reports, panels commented on:

- How teaching development was aligned with other (typically broader) capability development frameworks within universities and how it was guided by strategic initiatives.
- How support for teaching development was provided, with most universities having a central or focal unit charged with providing support. Some tension and need for balance exists between centrally located units and local and devolved support. Where panels considered that the level of devolution posed a challenge to either institutional commitment to teaching quality and development, or the ability to quality assure teaching development initiatives, they commented to that effect. Panels also commented on the position of units with the organisational structure of a university, where they considered the current position might impede the unit's ability to work effectively across a university.

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[9] Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education

- Variation among those units responsible for teaching development, with some having an academic role and expected to conduct research or provide policy advice.
- The range of teaching development services and support available (qualifications, professional development programmes, seminars, workshops) and the mechanisms available to support them (teaching development grants, fellowships, bursaries, university teaching conferences, peer networks, student mentors).
- A particular emphasis on the use of technology in teaching.
- All universities having some form of 'required' teaching development programme for academic staff new to tertiary teaching and all universities encouraging academic staff to undertake formal tertiary teaching qualifications. Two universities are participating in a pilot initiative based on the UK's HEA accreditation model.

The recommendations and other comments made by audit panels suggest areas for universities for focus on in supporting the development of teaching practice.

Supervision of Research Students

The final academic activity theme of the Cycle 5 audit framework considered supervision of research students, using five guideline statements:

GS 7.1 Qualification of supervisors,
GS 7.2 Resourcing of research students,
GS 7.3 Research supervision,
GS 7.4 Thesis examination, and
GS 7.5 Postgraduate student feedback.

Two guideline statements received six or more commendations, affirmation or recommendations in total (Figure 9) and these are examined further below. Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for the other guideline statements can be found in the Appendix.
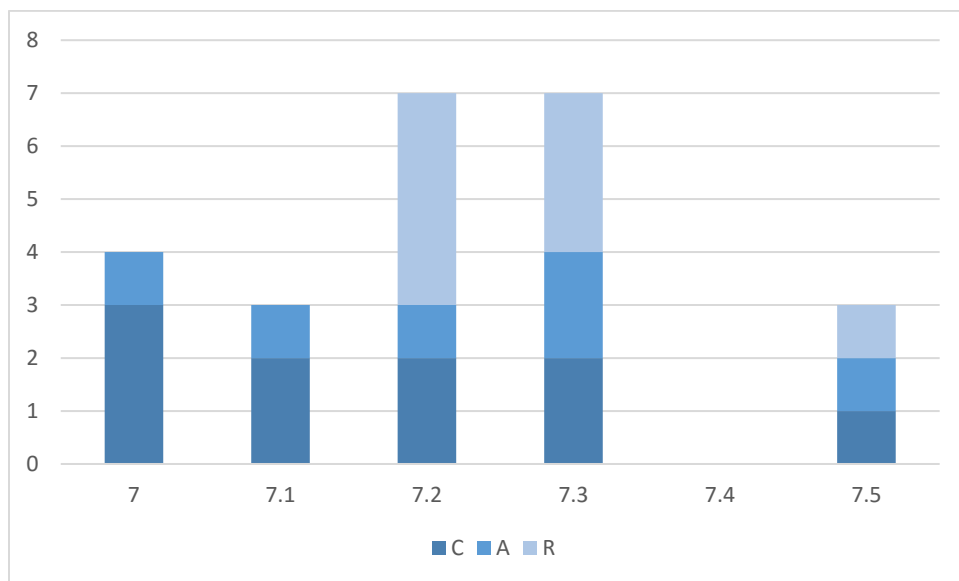

Figure 9 Supervision of research students

In considering this area, audit panels made commendations and affirmations of good practice not specifically related to individual guideline statements as set out in Table 18. They address good documentation and extension of policy and practice to encompass research masters students.

Table 18 Academic activity theme 7 commendations, affirmations and recommendations

Commendations	Affirmations
C10 The Panel **commends** the University on the comprehensive, clear and accessible Postgraduate Handbook and on the thoroughness of procedures associated with admission, enrolment, supervision, progression through study and examination. (AUT) C6 The Panel **commends** the University on the development, regular review and wide use of the suite of House Rules documents for postgraduate study. (LU) C12 The Panel **commends** the University on the establishment of the Faculty of Graduate Research and on the progress which has been made in addressing the issues identified in 2008. In particular, the Panel commends the Doctoral Policy and the Master's Thesis Policy as examples of good practice in documenting relevant requirements comprehensively and clearly in a single location. (VUW)	A5 The Panel **affirms** the University's decision to create a School of Graduate Research to encompass both doctoral and research master's students. (WU)

Resourcing of research students

GS 7.2 indicates "Universities should use documented processes for ensuring research students are appropriately resourced to do their research". Commendations, affirmations and recommendations for this guideline statement are set out in Table 19.

Table 19 GS 7.2 Resourcing of research students

Commendations	Recommendations
C8 The Panel **commends** the University on the extensive range of resources and support services it makes available for doctoral students. (AU) C8 The Panel **commends** the University on the development and use of the Mutual Expectations Agreement and encourages the University to ensure this is reviewed and, if necessary, refreshed on a regular basis. (LU)	R15 The Panel r**ecommends** that the University review its policy on Resource Minima for Postgraduate Students and establish processes to ensure that it is implemented consistently across the University and is understood by students. (MU) R14 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews its devolution of responsibility for resources for postgraduate research to Colleges and develops a more detailed set of institutional guidelines to ensure thesis research is not compromised by inadequate initial resourcing or insecure resourcing over the longer term. (UC) R6 The Panel **recommends** that the University assess and consider the impacts of variations in availability of departmental and academic division support for postgraduate research students. (OU) R13 The Panel **recommends** that the University review its orientation offerings targeted at PhD students and considers formalising the buddy system so that it can be monitored and is available for all research students, but especially for international students and students new to Lincoln. (LU)
Affirmations	
A6 The Panel **affirms** the University's collation of information about resourcing of research students and encourages the University to use this as a basis for developing policies or procedures which are aimed at ensuring equitable approaches to resourcing across the University, for faculty-based master's students as well as for MPhil and doctoral students. (WU)	

Commendations address the availability of support and a specific practice; the affirmation recognises collation of information regarding resourcing; and the recommendations are concerned with consistent approaches to resourcing and assessment of the impacts of variations in support, and orientation for doctoral students.

The full-text of the audit reports sets out the range of support that is available for doctoral students, in particular. It includes doctoral skills programmes, induction programmes for international students, support for Māori students and for Pacific students, scholarships, employment and support for academic career development, among others. Panels recognised that good reasons may exist for variations in support in different disciplines and encouraged universities to consider possible impacts of this.

The majority of the comment relates to PhD students. However, panels also noted support and initiatives for research masters students.

Research supervision

Commendations, affirmations and recommendations made by audit panels with respect to GS 7.3 "Universities should use documented processes for ensuring supervision of research students is effective and that student progress and support are appropriately monitored" are set out in Table 20.

Table 20 GS 7.3 Research supervision

Commendations	Recommendations
C4 The Panel **commends** the University on its clear and comprehensive documentation pertaining to higher degree postgraduate supervision, including the clear statements of responsibilities of all parties, and the Panel supports the University's stated intention to enhance oversight of supervision processes related to faculty-based master's research. (UW)	R7 The Panel **recommends** that the University implements electronic systems for eliciting, completing, disseminating and storing student and supervisor reports on research supervision in order to mitigate the risks associated with a paper-based system and to better facilitate institution-wide analysis (AU).
C5 The Panel **commends** the University on its overall management of postgraduate research study and in particular notes the various efforts made to encourage postgraduate research students to be active members of the University research community. (UW)	R16 The Panel **recommends** that the University review its policy and processes for the management of sub-doctoral research, including the appointment and support of supervisors, establishing which activities require University-level oversight and which may be carried out within Schools and Colleges, and developing a mechanism for cross-University sharing of experiences, including exchange of good practice. (MU)
Affirmations	
A7 The Panel **affirms** the University's review of progress reporting of doctoral and master's research. It encourages the University to articulate its resultant expectations about acceptable procedure and use of reports within the Doctoral Policy and also encourages the University to incorporate institutional monitoring of potential trends and issues which might be systemic either within a school or faculty, or across the institution. (VUW)	R8 The Panel **recommends** that the University develop a protocol within thesis progress reporting processes that ensures that individual issues are managed confidentially and effectively, but which also provides an avenue for centralised notification of issues which might be serious, systemic or point to problems with University processes. (VUW)
A7 The Panel **affirms** the continuation of improving processes for the reporting of doctoral candidates' progress using eVision. (OU)	

Commendations for this guideline statement relate to the overall management of postgraduate study, breadth and clarity of documentation, and responsibilities for both staff and students. Affirmations and recommendations relate to the implementation of improved systems and procedures, including progress reporting.

Full-text comments expand on university policies for research students, including progress reporting requirements. Six-monthly reporting is common across universities. This guideline statement is also concerned with the effectiveness of supervision and procedures being in place to address issues or disputes. While it was noted in two of the audit reports that some international students could be reticent about discussing difficulties or seeking advice, the reports state that students were generally positive in their comments about supervision and supervisors. Institutions were also encouraged to explore and share good practice.

Conclusions, implications and further work

This paper has examined the commendations, affirmations and recommendations made by audit panels in the fifth cycle academic audit of New Zealand universities. It first considered overall patterns of commendations, affirmations and recommendations by academic activity theme and guideline statements with higher frequencies of commendations, affirmations and recommendations. It then examined each of the academic activity themes in more detail, focusing on guideline statements with six, or more, commendations, affirmations and recommendations in total, plus any guideline statements that received four commendations or four recommendations. This final section develops conclusions, discusses implications from the findings of this paper and identifies opportunities for further work. Implications are focused on the academic audit framework for Cycle 6.

Conclusions

Overall, this analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations made by audit panels in the fifth cycle of academic audits suggests that New Zealand universities have strengths in the academic activity theme areas of leadership and management of teaching and learning, access, admission and transitions and supervision of postgraduate students. Particular strengths can be seen in strategic and operational planning, provision of appropriate information resources and access, admission and transition processes where universities are specifically considering access, admission and transition for Māori students and Pasifika students. Learning support is also an area of strength.

Curriculum and assessment, teaching quality and leadership and management of teaching and learning (which is also an area of strength) are the priority academic activity themes for further development. It would be unreasonable to characterise universities as performing poorly in these areas. They are however areas that are experiencing higher levels of change with increasingly diverse cohorts of students who have different experiences of teaching and learning and greater impacts of technology. Audit panels have recognised the need for universities to continue to develop these areas, particularly with respect to delegations, strategic and operational planning, assessment practices, benchmarking of programmes, assurance of teaching quality and support for teaching development. Academic advice for students, feedback from students and resourcing of research students are other specific areas for further development.

Some broader conclusions can also be drawn. The first is that universities have maintained high academic quality standards. While some commonalities exist between recommendations made in the audits of different universities, no issues emerge that would suggest any areas of systemic concern across the New Zealand university sector. A further overarching comment, if not conclusion, is that the audit reports reflect significant amounts of large scale change and initiatives being implemented across the university sector. Some of these continue to be redevelopment arising from the Canterbury

earthquakes. Other large-scale change and initiatives occurring over the period of this academic audit were (non-earthquake-related) building programmes including the development of new campuses, strategy renewal, university-wide curriculum renewal and redevelopment, major systems implementation including student management systems, major reviews of support services and changes of executive and senior leadership in universities.

With eight universities each with differing histories, current contexts and priorities, it is difficult to identify emergent themes, and this was not the focus of this paper. However, two areas that require ongoing attention are the extent to which findings reflect panel composition and consistency of decision-making within individual universities. Cycle 5 audit panels did not include student members, and this may have contributed to a relatively low level of commendations, affirmations and recommendations for guideline statements concerned with student voice and student feedback processes. The second emergent theme is the need for universities to continue to be attentive to consistency and equity in the student experience across different faculties and schools within individual universities. This conclusion also applies to staff.

Implications

The major implication arising from the analysis of Cycle 5 academic audit reports has been the decision to extend the length of the period between academic audits, so that universities will undergo their Cycle 6 academic audit 7-8 years after their Cycle 5 audit. This decision was based, in part, on universities demonstrating generally good academic quality practices during Cycle 5 and no systemic issues of concern being considered to exist.

Together with the first paper in this series, which reviewed the process elements of Cycle 5 (Matear, 2018), these findings have implications for the design of the audit framework for Cycle 6. The need for greater attention to evidence and taking a self-evaluative approach to evidence was identified during the review of processes and is reinforced again here. Apart from GS 2.2 (Access and transition), 2.3 (Academic advice) and 5.2 (Learning support), the other Cycle 5 guideline statements that identified specific groups of students or types of delivery (mainly other campuses) received relatively few commendations, affirmations or recommendations. The audit component of Cycle 6 will not pre-identify specific groups of students or forms of delivery. It will expect universities to consider all students, all staff engaged in or supporting teaching or supervision and all delivery; and to place emphasis on groups of students and types or modes of delivery as is appropriate to their student body and strategic priorities. Cycle 6 will also include students (or recent graduates) as members of audit panels.

The good practices identified in Cycle 5 also have implications for universities in considering their self-review activities for Cycle 6 and in their continuous improvement approach to quality assurance. The importance of university context has been emphasised above. However, universities will also be able to learn from the commendations, affirmations and recommendations in Cycle 5 and may find it helpful to consider their individual audit reports within the context of overall patterns of commendations, affirmations and recommendations across all Cycle 5 academic audit reports.

Further work

This paper has provided an overview of the commendations, affirmations and recommendations made across the Cycle 5 academic audits of New Zealand universities. One of the objectives of the paper was to provide a compilation of commendations, affirmations and recommendations to serve as a resource and guide to where areas of good practice exist. Each of the academic activity themes and guideline statements constitute a substantive topic in their own right and the first opportunity for further work is more detailed examination of specific topics. Some of this has already been undertaken in the development of conference papers (Matear, Varnham and Shaw, 2018), columns in the AQA newsletter, thematic notes and other analyses for specific groups. Considerable further scope exists, although this may be more appropriately the domain of disciplinary experts in the topic addressed by the guideline statement.

The analysis in this paper has followed the structure of the academic audit framework for Cycle 5. Other analyses of audit findings, for example Kirkwood (2013), have used stages within a quality assurance cycle as a framework. Further analysis using other frameworks could be considered. Associated with this, further work utilising more sophisticated analyses, including computer-aided textual analysis could be considered. However, given that the context of individual universities is important in terms of commendations, affirmations and recommendations being made by audit panels, any further analyses would need to exercise considerable care in retaining the important context aspects of audit reports.

From a quality assurance perspective, the priority for further work is to consider the impact of audit reports and affirmations and recommendations, in particular. This is planned to be the third paper in this series of papers that review Cycle 5 academic audit.

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Appendix: Guideline statements with lower frequencies of commendations, affirmations and recommendations

Commendations	Affirmations	Recommendations
GS 1.3 Student input: Universities should facilitate student input to planning, policy development and monitoring of key academic activities.		
C2 The Panel **commends** the University for using systematic mechanisms for ensuring student input is sought, feedback given and information shared across all levels of the University. (AU) C1 The Panel **commends** the University on its strong strategic planning process and the extent of stakeholder consultation for its new Strategic Plan. The Panel endorses the development of appropriate KPIs and reporting processes which will enable the University to measure progress and the Council, in particular, to satisfy itself of the quality and relevance of the University's activities. (UC) C4 The Panel **commends** the University for its overall commitment and systematic approach to gaining student input into the activities and processes of the University. (OU)	A1 The Panel **affirms** the University's review of ways to enhance student involvement in and input to academic policy development, monitoring and decision-making. (MU)	
GS 2.1 Admission and selection: Universities' admission and selection policies and practices should be clear and publicly available to students.		
C2 The Panel commends the University on the coordinated approach to improving the application and enrolment process for students, including the Choose Lincoln Report of the 2016 Academic Audit of Lincoln University 59 Strategy and the implementation of MyLinc, and the support it provides to students to assist their transition to university life. (LU)	A3 The Panel **affirms** the University's work in developing consistent formats for the presentation of regulations on the web, noting the intention to extend this to qualification regulations through use of a common template. (MU)	
GS 3.1 Programme approval: Universities' internal course and programme approval processes must meet national (CUAP/NZQF) expectations and should include opportunity for input from stakeholders (including Māori) where appropriate.		
C4 The Panel **commends** the University on the clear, comprehensive and systematic programme approval process which ensures appropriate stakeholder input and external academic scrutiny as well as facilitating benchmarking and ensuring strategic alignment of new	A4 The Panel **affirms** the implementation of the Qualifications Policy and the Qualifications Framework and the development and implementation of the Articulation Register. (MU)	R3 The Panel **recommends** that that the University should address progress on its Māori Strategic Framework further and that it should consider how Māori knowledge and pedagogy can be incorporated into curricula. (OU)

Commendations	Affirmations	Recommendations
developments. (AUT)		
GS 3.4 Programme review: Universities should have regular reviews of programmes and courses, including external accreditation reviews, which include input from students and other stakeholders and which are used to ensure curriculum quality.		
		R6 The Panel **recommends** that the University explore ways of ensuring that programmes which are subject to professional accreditation review are also reviewed regularly for assurance that they deliver general education and non-discipline-specific experiences which align with the institution's Graduate Profile. (AU) R7 The Panel **recommends** the University complete its redevelopment of the programme review policy, procedures and guidelines to inform preparation for the reviews scheduled in 2017 and thereafter and explores how good outcomes of reviews might be shared across faculties. (LU)
GS 3.7 Equivalence of learning outcomes: Universities should have formal mechanisms to ensure that learning outcomes of students in programmes		
		R7 The Panel **recommends** that the University continues to promulgate and explain the Equivalence Policy to ensure it is well understood and is implemented effectively across all Colleges. The Panel suggests that the University revisits the issue of equivalence of assessment tasks and explores ways of quality assuring these. The University is urged to find ways of monitoring adherence with the Policy and address any implementation breaches. (MU) R5 The Panel **recommends** the responsibility for overall quality assurance of programmes offered overseas, including teaching quality and learning outcomes, is part of the quality assurance portfolio of the DVC (Academic) (or successor role) in order to ensure oversight of the processes used to achieve equivalence as well as to ensure cultural needs and constraints are provided for. (VUW)
GS3 .9 Assessment in te reo Māori: Universities should have and, where appropriate, use procedures to facilitate assessment in te reo Māori.		
C2 The Panel **commends** the University on its initiatives to promote the submission of assessment in te reo Māori, its efforts to build capability in both students		

Commendations	Affirmations	Recommendations
and staff and on the increasing amount of assessment being submitted either for assessment in te reo Māori or for assessment in translation. (WU)		

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">GS 4.1 Student engagement: Universities should use processes for monitoring and enhancing students' engagement with their study and learning.</td></tr>
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Commendations	Affirmations	Recommendations
C7 The Panel *commends* the University on its proactive and inclusive approach to enhancing student engagement, including the appointment of a senior management role with oversight responsibility for student success; the pervasiveness of a student-centred ethos among staff; and the evidence-based strategies which are used to monitor engagement. (AUT) C8 The Panel **commends** the University for its commitment to enhancing student engagement with their study and personal learning, including encouraging students to undertake volunteer work and develop a sense of social responsibility. (OU)	A6 The Panel **affirms** the development and implementation of the Student Success Strategy and encourages the University to ensure there is ongoing evaluation of both intervention effectiveness and overall outcomes of achievement. (MU) A2 The Panel **affirms** the University's activities to enhance student engagement and, in particular, supports the introduction of a co-curricular transcript. (UC) A4 The Panel affirms the efforts made by staff in the Lincoln-Telford Division to support pre-degree students and to encourage their engagement with their study. (LU)	

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">GS 4.2 Retention and completion: Universities should use processes for assisting the retention, academic success and completion rates for particular groups, including Māori and international students.</td></tr>
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Commendations	Affirmations	Recommendations
C7 The Panel **commends** the University on its support for Māori and Pacific students, in particular the MAPAS programme and the Tuākana Learning Community and the approach the University has taken to ensuring the Tuākana programme is culturally relevant, evidence-based and faculty-embedded. (AU) C9 The Panel **commends** the University on the development of the Student Mentoring Framework, and in particular on the introduction of Te Pūtahi Atawhai peer mentoring programme across the University and for the success which is evident for students who use this service. (VUW) C3 The Panel **commends** the University on the extensive range of support activities which is provided for pre-tertiary, undergraduate and postgraduate Pasifika students and on the dedication of the Pacific Development Team to the participation and success of	A4 The Panel **affirms** the University on the development of its overarching Student Retention Plan and Student Retention Implementation Plan, and on the systematic reporting of achievements related to equity groups targeted by the Plans. (VUW)	R7 The Panel **recommends** that the University ensures that faculties, schools and departments are made aware of their responsibilities in jointly owning and assisting the University to meet the institutional KPIs pertaining to academic achievement of priority groups of students and are accountable for outcomes relevant to the students in their programmes. (WU)

Commendations	Affirmations	Recommendations
Pasifika students. (UC)		
GS 4.3 Feedback to students: Universities should use processes for providing feedback to students on their academic progress. (See also 7.3 re thesis students)		
		R4 The Panel **recommends** that the University consider how it identifies students at risk of under-performance early in their studies and how it ensures that all students receive useful and timely feedback on their performance. (OU)
GS 4.4 Under-achieving students: Universities should use processes for identifying and assisting students at risk of under-achieving.		
		R9 The Panel **recommends** that the University carry out thorough systematic monitoring of the application of the Academic Standing Model to students who are identified as making poor progress or being at risk of under-achieving, and evaluate the adequacy and appropriateness of the assistance available to such students. (MU)
GS 4.5 High-achieving students: Universities should use processes for identifying and supporting high-achieving, and/or potentially highachieving, students.		
	A5 The Panel **affirms** the University's introduction of the Course Signals system and encourages a systematic evaluation of its effectiveness from the perspective of both the University and its students. (VUW)	R10 The Panel **recommends** that the University explores how it might use the Academic Standing Model to enhance its recognition of high-achieving and potentially highachieving students, engages with students to identify further opportunities to support such students, and communicates these developments to students. (MU)
GS 5.1 Academic appeals and grievances: Universities must have policies and/or procedures which they use to address academic appeals and grievances.		
		R3 The Panel **recommends** that the University reviews how it communicates its appeals and academic grievance processes to students, both via the website and through paper and/or programme guides, to ensure clear and consistent advice is available and accessible to students, both about the processes and about who they should approach for assistance with lodging an appeal or grievance claim. (AUT) R10 The Panel **recommends** that the University urgently review, refresh and refine its provisions for appeals and its procedures for appeals, academic grievances and complaints. (LU)
GS 5.3 Personal support and safety Universities must provide safe and inclusive campus environments and should provide opportunity for all students to access appropriate pastoral and social support services.		

Commendations	Affirmations	Recommendations
C9 The Panel **commends** the University for its significant effort in endeavouring to provide an inclusive and safe campus for all students and staff. (AUT) C5 The Panel **commends** the University and UCSA on the extensive and effective provision of services and facilities which enhance safety, support and personal wellbeing on campus, and in particular the proactive role played by UC Security in providing a safe campus for all staff, students and visitors. (UC) C9 The Panel **commends** the University's commitment, led by the Vice-Chancellor, to, and development of, research-led interventions that help contribute towards, creating a safer and more inclusive campus environment. (OU)		
GS 5.4 Support on other campuses Universities should have formal mechanisms to ensure appropriate learning and pastoral support is provided for students in programmes taught on other campuses and/or with partner institutions, including those which are overseas.		
	A4 The Panel **affirms** the University's review of Northern campuses' support services and its signalled intention (enhancement # 6) to better capture feedback from students on other campuses. (OU)	
GS 5.6 Feedback from graduates Universities should use processes for gaining feedback from graduates regarding their satisfaction with their university experience and learning outcomes and should be able to demonstrate that this feedback is used.		
	A3 The Panel **affirms** the University's Graduate Destination Survey and the use made of resultant analyses, and suggests the University extends the survey and analyses to include specific reference to attributes in the Graduate Profile from when the first cohort which should have acquired these attributes graduates. (UC)	R9 The Panel **recommends** that the University introduces a graduate feedback mechanism aligned with the postgraduate exit survey, such that both address such matters as attainment of graduate attributes and assessment of student experience. (WU)
GS 6.2 Research-active staff Universities' workload management processes should ensure that degree-level students are taught mainly by staff who are research-active.		
C10 The Panel **commends** the University on its success in raising the profile and valuing of excellence in teaching during a period of significant focus on improving institutional research output. (VUW)		R5 The Panel *recommends* that the University continues its provision of Doctoral Study Awards and continues to explore all other means to support the research activity of its academic staff, to ensure that its degree-level programmes are taught by active

Commendations	Affirmations	Recommendations
		researchers and that postgraduate students have a wide range of suitably qualified and experienced supervisors available to guide their research projects. (AUT) R12 The Panel recommends the University continue its review of workload models used in academic departments and faculties, and endeavours to develop a set of principles which can be adopted across the University. (LU).
GS 6.6 Teaching recognition Universities' reward processes (promotion; special awards) should recognize teaching capability		
C3 The Panel **commends** the University on its Teaching Advocate programme and on the inclusive nature of its suite of awards which recognise teaching. (WU) C4 The Panel **commends** the University on its teaching awards framework which includes systematic stair-cased processes for recognizing and rewarding excellent teachers. (MU) C12 The Panel **commends** the University for its support for and recognition of teaching excellence and for the development and contribution of the Socrates Group. (OU)		
GS 7.1 Qualification of supervisors Universities should use documented processes for ensuring staff supervising research students are appropriately trained and experienced as supervisors, including processes to enable new or inexperienced staff to gain experience as supervisors.		
C11 The Panel *commends* the University for the provisions made for training, supporting, mentoring and monitoring supervisors and for its guidelines regarding workload management of supervisors. (AUT) C7 The Panel **commends** the University on its processes for ensuring thesis supervision is undertaken by appropriately qualified, trained and supported staff and that the requirements are communicated clearly to both staff and students. (LU)	A6 The Panel **affirms** the University considering making training for new PhD supervisors mandatory. (OU)	
GS 7.5 Postgraduate student feedback Universities should use processes for gaining feedback on student satisfaction with supervision and support for postgraduate students and be able to demonstrate that feedback is used to inform improvement initiatives.		
C6 The Panel **commends** the University on its	A7 The Panel **affirms** the introduction of a postgraduate	R17 The Panel **recommends** that the University

Commendations	Affirmations	Recommendations
comprehensive suite of postgraduate surveys, on the extensive use of the data, responsiveness to the analyses and on the communication back to students of actions taken. (UC)	research student exit survey and encourages the University to include faculty-based master's students as well as MPhil and doctoral students in the survey. (WU)	develops a regular formal survey of postgraduate students to address, *inter alia,* issues related to supervision, resourcing, support needs and services, opportunities for providing feedback and input to matters that concern them or their research and opportunities for professional engagement. Such a survey should specifically seek feedback from priority groups, including distance students. It might be benchmarked against other such surveys used elsewhere in Australasia. (MU)