



September 2020

Te Pokapū Kounġa Mātauranga mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa

Quality Assurance and COVID-19

Most comment on the impacts of Covid-19 has rightly focussed on how students and institutions have been affected and have responded. Consequently, there has been a great deal of comment about impacts on teaching and learning and support for students, as well as student experiences. This short article comments on how quality assurance requirements and practices for universities in Aotearoa New Zealand have also responded to the Covid-19 pandemic and considers how these responses align with international experiences as summarised by the QAA in the UK.

From an external quality assurance perspective, the audit phase of Cycle 6 Academic Audit has been deferred, there have been minor amendments to CUAP (Committee on University Academic Programmes) requirements and a range of responses from professional accreditation bodies. While the deferral of the audit phase of Cycle 6 was relatively straightforward, future attention will need to be paid to the realities of undertaking university self-reviews in what is likely to be an uncertain environment. The “all modes and forms delivery” scope statement for the Cycle 6 Audit Framework should enable the framework to adequately assess an increase in digital delivery of courses and programmes. However, other jurisdictions have signalled the need to develop additional guidance for quality assurance of digital delivery and AQA should consider whether additional guidance would be useful.

CUAP processes have continued on their normal timelines although the meetings themselves moved online. A minor amendment to CUAP processes allows universities the option of deferring Graduating Year Reviews for 12 months. CUAP will monitor whether this 12-month deferral is creating future peaks of activity for universities.

Universities also need to meet quality assurance requirements for professionally accredited degrees. Professional bodies have advised of a range of amendments including extension of registration or accreditation periods, flexibility in meeting practicum requirements and changes to how accreditation visits are undertaken. These changes are consistent with international changes, particularly flexibility in practicum requirements and planning for additional mentoring and support for new graduates.

Internal quality assurance activities have also been impacted by Covid-19. Universities have deferred academic programme reviews and are making changes to review processes, particularly where these involve international input. The deferral of programme reviews also reflects staff workloads associated with moves to online teaching and changes to Covid Alert levels... Continued on the next page (pg 2).

AQA | About

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) was established in 1993 to carry out audits of the processes in universities which underpin academic quality. The mission

of AQA is to contribute to high quality New Zealand university education by engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of universities based on high quality, internationally acceptable,

academic practices, and by providing quality assurance and quality enhancement services which assist universities in facilitating excellent student experience and learning outcomes.

Quality Enhancement

An overview of university final enhancement theme reports will be released on the enhancement themes website shortly <https://www.enhanceunz.com/>

The overview report provides a summary of enhancement theme initiatives, broadly grouped into:

- initiatives concerned with access and transition to university.
- student-focussed retention and outcomes initiatives, including initiatives that engaged communities and other partners.
- university-centric retention and outcomes initiatives including curriculum, teaching and learning, teaching development and teaching space initiatives to support Mātauranga Māori, bi-cultural competence and confidence, and employability.

The reports from universities include initial assessments of success or impact. Universities will report on progress in addressing their enhancement theme plans in their self-review reports for the audit phase of Cycle 6. It also provides reflections on the enhancement theme itself. The enhancement theme itself did not generate new initiatives as it built mainly upon existing work. However, it has provided a mechanism for focusing on and sharing priorities, initiatives and progress both within and between universities.

Reflections on the enhancement theme also identified challenges. These include:

- gaining engagement beyond those immediately involved in the enhancement theme.
- relatively short timeframes which might make it difficult to demonstrate progress on enhancement theme plans in the audit phase.
- whether involving more subject experts, increasing access to cultural leadership and making connections to other major workstreams could have strengthened the enhancement theme.
- acknowledgement that initiatives within universities are limited by underlying, complex and entrenched, social issues of disadvantage.
- articulating narratives addressing equity and benefit for other groups of students through maintaining a focus on Māori students and Pasifika students. 'Getting it right' for Māori students and Pasifika students will have benefits for all students.
- tension between recognising progress and gains made while acknowledging that significant challenges still exist and need to be addressed.

Student reflections recognised that student voice(s) had been a valued part of the decision-making process and the Enhancement Theme has provided a good model of partnership. "Our Taura are more than statistics, we are people with whānau, hapu and iwi walking alongside us and our journey through University".

Quality Assurance and COVID-19 continued from page 1

...This will again be a matter for universities and AQA to consider with respect to self-review and other audit preparation (auditor recruitment and training) activities.

International review input is an issue for internal quality assurance, professional accreditation and academic audit processes. AQA also needs to consider whether it will need to amend audit processes and will be guided by developing international good practices. AQA, and others engaged in external quality assurance, need to remain conscious that the impacts of Covid-19 will be ongoing.

Auditor Recruitment and Training

AQA is continuing to seek applications, particularly from Māori and from Pasifika Peoples, to the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers. Criteria for appointment can be found [here](#) or please contact Sheelagh.matear@qa.ac.nz to discuss an application. AQA will continue to receive applications throughout Cycle 6.

Student Voice

Contributed by Ali Leota, National President of Tauira Pasifika

E le sili le ta'i i lo le tapua'i

To lead is not as important as to support

-Samoa proverb

Undoubtedly, this year has been one of the most challenging times for our universities, particularly for our Pasifika students—having to adapt to online learning without devices; on the front line as an essential worker; repatriated back to the Pacific; supporting our families and the cancellation of many opportunities. Despite all of this, our Pasifika student leaders across all eight universities were able to virtually band together.



Tauira Pasifika and the University of Otago Pacific Island Students' Association Executive Workshop in August

Through our regular Talanoa Friday we were able to advocate and contribute to national discussion, so that we were able to support Pasifika students to continue to chase their dreams and aspirations through higher education.

Over the last six months, our Pasifika students have been through many uncertainties just as our parents and grandparents once did when they first journeyed to Aotearoa New Zealand in search of employment and education opportunities. If anything, 2020 has strengthened the resilience of Pasifika students.

With these experiences alone, it has allowed us to reflect and talanoa how we can best contribute to our communities, but also support universities' progress forward. We are currently working closely with the Ministry of Education and our partners Te Mana Ākonga, NZUSA and the Learners with Disability Network developing a strengths-based model of meaningful student partnership for institutions to enhance collective action. Furthermore, in partnership with AQA, Te Mana Ākonga, NZUSA and NZISA we are in the middle of planning for the 2020 Student Voice Summit which will provide a professional development opportunity to incoming student representatives.

As our nation adjusts to this new found reality, we are hopeful that we will be able to gather our proud Pasifika student representatives from across the country to hold fono and talanoa, as we did for the first time last year. In the meantime, we wish to encourage our universities' to support Pasifika student representatives to join us at the annual Student Voice Summit on 19 November in Wellington.

Inter-Cycle Reports

The AQA Board has reviewed and accepted the inter-cycle report from the University of Otago. The inter-cycle report from the Auckland University of Technology has been received. The AUT report is the last of these reports to be received. AQA will undertake a short review of the inter-cycle report process.

AQA Annual Report 2019-2020

AQA's annual report for the 2019-2020 year is on the AQA website [here](#). It contains a review of the year from the Chair of the AQA Board and audited financial statements including the Statement of Performance.

AQA External Review 2020

The report of the 2020 external review of AQA has been received by the AQA Board and the Vice-Chancellors. It will be discussed by the AQA Board and Vice-Chancellors and is anticipated to be released before the end of the year. AQA wishes to thank the Panel who undertook the review 'visit' remotely and everyone who contributed to the review.

Have You Seen This?

This 'Have you seen this?' column provides links to emerging compilations of Covid-19 research and responses and other impacts on higher education and quality assurance.

The QAA in the UK have published a summary of a [Forum](#) with their international partners. The Forum examined how quality assurance agencies across the world were responding to Covid-19.

The Institute of Research Innovation has compiled a database of higher education literature on Covid-19. See <https://www.instituteofresearchinnovation.com/data/covid-19-and-higher-education-coronavirus>

The [National Teaching Repository](#) is a searchable database of teaching resources and pedagogical research from the UK.

Also in the UK, [WONKHE](#) has a compilation of COVID-19 comment and analyses.

From The USA, education futurist [Bryan Alexander](#) has developed a [blog series](#) imagining ongoing COVID-19 impacts on higher education.

Susanna Karakhanyan and Bjørn Stensaker provide a reminder that other significant trends continue to exert influence on quality assurance in their new book "Global Trends in Higher Education Quality Assurance" published by [Brill](#).

Meetings and Conference Calendar

There are an increasing number of conferences, webinars and other events that are being delivered online. The following may be of interest:

3-5 November 2020, online and virtual
QAA Scotland's International Enhancement Theme Conference.

This will be a modular conference with live sessions, asynchronous papers, toolkits and resources. The conference website is [here](#).

5 November 2020, Online
[Achieving Sustainable Academic Quality and Compliance Outcomes](#), organised by Higher Ed Services, Australia.

25-26 November 2020, online
12th Higher Education International Conference on "[Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance in Higher Education under the Pandemic](#)", jointly organised by the [Macao Polytechnic Institute](#) and the [Asia-Pacific Quality Network](#). **Abstracts** are due 18 October 2020.

19 November 2020, Wellington

The 5th Annual Student Voice Summit is planned to be held in Wellington on 19 November. Details will be available on the AQA website soon.

20 November 2020, online

AQA's annual Quality Forum will be an online event this year. Please contact Sheelagh.Matear@aqac.ac.nz for more information.



AQA | Academic
Quality Agency
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We welcome feedback on this newsletter and the AQA website, along with news and suggestions for newsletter items.

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