Victoria University of Wellington

Te Whare Wānanga o Te Ūpoko o Te Ika a Māui

Academic audit report

Cycle 4   November 2009

New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit
Te Wāhanga Tātari

Victoria University of Wellington
Te Whare Wānanga o
Te Ūpoko o Te Ika a Māui

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Preface

Background

The New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit was established in 1993 to consider and review New Zealand universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the academic quality and standards which are necessary for achieving their stated aims and objectives, and to comment on the extent to which procedures in place are applied effectively and reflect good practice in maintaining quality.[1] Since its establishment, the Unit has administered three complete cycles of academic audit.

- Cycle 1 academic audits were full institutional audits of the then seven universities; they were conducted during the period 1995-1998.

- Cycle 2 academic audits focussed on research policy and management, the research-teaching nexus and the support of postgraduate students, as well as a theme specific to each university; they were conducted during the period 2000-2001. In 2001, a full institutional academic audit was conducted at the eighth New Zealand university - the newly-created Auckland University of Technology.

- Cycle 3 academic audits focussed on teaching quality, programme delivery, and the achievement of learning outcomes; they were conducted during the period 2003-2008.

The present cycle of academic audits – Cycle 4, of which this is the third – are full institutional audits, and are being administered over the period 2008-2012.[2]

The process of audit

The process of audit requires a self-assessment which informs an audit Portfolio (structured with respect to the Cycle 4 indicative framework) in which the university evaluates its progress towards achieving its goals and objectives related to the focus of the audit, identifies areas for improvement, and details intended plans, strategies and activities with respect to enhancement initiatives. After examining the Portfolio, and seeking further information if necessary, the audit panel conducts interviews in a site visit to the university to seek verification of materials read, and to inform an audit report which is structured in accordance with the framework for the conduct of Cycle 4 audits as set down in the Unit's 2007 *Academic audit manual*.[3] The report commends good practice and makes recommendations intended to assist the university in its own programme of continuous improvement of quality and added value in the activities identified by the Unit as the focus of Cycle 4 audits.

Soon after the publication of the audit report, the Unit discusses with the university the preferred procedures to be used in the follow-up to audit and the monitoring of follow-up activities.

Victoria University of Wellington academic audit

The Victoria University of Wellington agreed to an academic audit site visit in August 2009, requiring the submission of the self-review Portfolio by early June 2009. The panel appointed to carry out the academic audit of the University met in Wellington on 9 July 2009 for a preliminary meeting at which it evaluated the material it had received, and determined further materials required. The Chair of the panel and the Director of the Unit undertook a Planning Visit to the University on 22 July 2009 to discuss the

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[1] See *Appendix 2* for the Unit's complete terms of reference, its vision and its objective with respect to academic audit.

[2] See *Appendix 3* for the framework for Cycle 4 academic audits.

[3] John M. Jennings (compiler), *Academic audit manual for use in Cycle 4 academic audits by the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, Te Wāhanga Tātari, December 2007,* Wellington, the Unit, 2007.

supply of the further materials requested as well as arrangements for the site visit. The four-day site visit by the whole panel to Victoria University of Wellington took place on 11-14 August 2009 hosted by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Pat Walsh. During the site visits, the panel interviewed 141 people – members of Council, staff, students and stakeholders.

The findings of the panel as expressed in this report are based on the written information supplied by the University and on the information gained through interviews conducted during the site visit.

John M. Jennings

Director
November 2009

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Summary

General

Victoria University of Wellington The University conducts research and delivers its academic programmes on four campuses in Wellington City. There has been considerable change over the past four years, some of it driven by the recommendations in the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit report. The 2009 audit site visit was at a time when the University was in the middle of a long-term change project. The University is commended for the evidence of positive change in confidence since the 2005 cycle 3 academic audit.

Strategic plan The *Strategic plan 2009-2014* provides a clearer identity for the University, and the University is commended for the alignment of the *Strategic plan* with planning documents and for the extent of understanding and acceptance by the University community. The *Strategic plan* lacks targets or measures of progress, and the panel recommends that key performance indicators and targets be developed and a more robust regime to monitor and measure progress be developed and embedded.

Management structure The management structure appears rather complex and it is recommended that the Faculty and School management and administrative structures and responsibilities and the balance of tasks between the 'centre' and the Faculties and Schools be reviewed.

Devolution The University is aware that devolution is resulting in variability of practices and interpretations of policy, and the University seeks to centralise some processes with pan-University approaches to implementing policies and plans in research, learning and teaching and administration in order to align practices without losing the strengths of devolution.

Equity The University is considering the framework and infrastructure around equity issues, and the University's intention to co-ordinate current endeavours to improve Māori and Pacific student retention is affirmed. It appears that strong leadership for Pacific students and staff is required, and it is recommended that the *Strategic plan* includes objectives and associated targets for Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and for Pacific under equity. The 'women in leadership' programme was noted.

Teaching and learning

Learning and teaching plan The implementation of *Pathways to success* had involved considerable curriculum changes. The University's attention has now turned to continuous improvement in learning and teaching to gain more consistency in the learning experiences of students. It is recommended that the *Learning and teaching plan* includes a clearly defined process to monitor the implementation of the plan and to measure the effectiveness and impact on the student learning experience.

Curriculum development Curriculum changes have impacted greatly on several degree programmes with some agreement on point values of courses, and have prompted reviews of the content and delivery in a number of courses. Changes have also required the successful embedding of graduate attributes. The attributes of leadership and

communication are being highlighted in the Victoria Plus Award and the Victoria International Leadership Programme which are both commended, as is the recognition of extra-curricular activities in preparing graduates for leadership positions in society.

Learning environment

Course information. The University intends to improve students' access to information and course planning.

Teaching quality. The University recognises the challenges to teaching quality arising from factors such as the growth in class sizes and associated workload, and coping adequately with the diversity of students' abilities. The University recognises the need for the development and adoption of a set of defined responsibilities in teaching, and the fostering of reflection on teaching and innovative practice.

The Library. The University is commended for the positive comments by those interviewed about the effectiveness and positive impact of the investment in the Library since the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit with enhancements to facilities, resources and services.

Information technology. Improvement to access to the internet, provision of self-service kiosks, the development of flexible delivery and learning spaces, and the collaborative access to teachers were noted, although it was not clear whether there has been enough strategic thinking around learning technologies generally.

Learner support

The Student Services Group brings together all agencies that provide support for students during their time at the University, and they are proactive in seeking to work with Faculties and students given the devolved nature of the University. The high quality of student learning support with Student Services is commended as evidenced by the high regard in which they are held by staff and students. Student Learning Support Services provides assistance in developing academic learning strategies, and the programmes in place to assist Māori and Pacific students and the outreach programme into schools to provide Māori and Pacific students with skills and support were noted.

Research environment

Research quality an performance

The University has set itself the goal of a 'dramatic' improvement in overall research performance and the Research Office is central to the institutional drive in research. The University is commended for the reported success of the establishment and administration of the Research Trust Victoria which manages funds acquired for and committed to research and scholarship. Research reviews and an internal Performance-Based Research Fund round are providing guidance to further practical steps to be undertaken in research activities across the University.

Research students and research supervision

The University has created a 'virtual' faculty, the Faculty of Graduate Research, to bring consistency to the administration of PhD candidates and to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of services to students, and it is recommended that in support of high-level co-ordination and co-operation among faculties and Central Service Units, the work of the Faculty be monitored to ensure it assists Faculties and Schools to improve consistency in administration and to strengthen a student-focussed approach to PhD students and their progress.

Teaching and learning within a research environment	The interdependence of research and teaching was the subject of an earlier academic audit. It was acknowledged in interviews that with the recent focus on research and curriculum, the present focus on enhancing the learning and teaching environment would be an appropriate time to revitalise discussion on the research-teaching nexus.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Stakeholder engagement	A *Māori stakeholder engagement framework* has been developed to ensure the University is informed by, and responds to, the needs of key Māori stakeholders.
Māori students	The University is concerned by the stable enrolment and retention statistics for Māori and it is recommended that the *Strategic plan* includes a goal, and operational plans contain actions and targets to bring the issue to the attention of the University community and to support and direct the responses of Faculties and Schools.
Māori staff	Toihuarewa, which includes Māori staff, Māori student representatives and non-Māori academics undertaking research or teaching with significant Māori content, has been operating for 10 years and has had a positive impact in supporting Māori academic staff to be better teachers. The University intends to review and enhance the support provided for Māori general staff.
Māori research	The *Research strategy for Māori @ Victoria* has set targets for the University. An annual Toihurewa symposium since 2008 has showcased Māori-related research. The University is encouraged to 'grow' its own researchers so that there is less need to recruit Māori research leaders from outside the University.

University staff

Workload allocation	The University's workload system has been specifically driven by the need for consistency and equity. The University's intention is to complete the development of a workload assessment system that satisfies stakeholders.
Professional development	The recent Human Resources Staff Development Policy brings together activities across three main agencies, the most important of those being the University Teaching Development Centre. The contribution of the Centre to professional development is valued by academic staff. Its impact is limited by the number of staff in the Centre. The Centre is looking for ways to improve the liaison with Faculties in order to provide more assistance for individuals and disciplines.
Staff appraisal	The Professional Development and Career Planning scheme is considered useful and identifies needs associated with staff being able to achieve their goals.
Leadership	The Leading People programme is providing leadership training, and the University's intention to maintain a database of those who have completed leadership programmes from which to draw to fill a range of leadership roles is affirmed.

Institutional quality assurance

Quality assurance framework

The processes that constitute an overall system of quality assurance are partly devolved but with central monitoring of the overall University goals. There is little or no cross-faculty comparison of standards given the present level of Faculty autonomy. The University recognises it needs better data and analysis, and is aware of the variability of practice and student experience arising from devolution. It is recommended that the University determines an appropriate institution-wide infrastructure and leadership for quality assurance and quality enhancement which builds on existing mechanisms and procedures, facilitates ownership by the whole University community, and provides assurance of institution-wide quality.

Student evaluations

Follow-up on information provided by student evaluations of teachings and courses and feedback to students is left to individual staff members. Feedback to students is uneven. The University is exploring ways of using data provided by the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE).

Community engagement

Engagement with the community

Connections with the city have grown over recent years, and the University is now more engaged with the region. The University intends to be more strategic, linking current initiatives to specific objectives and identifying new initiatives and procedures.

Value of graduates

There is agreement that the quality of graduates was generally acceptable to employers, and the Career Development and Employment section of Student Services offers a range of services linking students with employers.

External academic collaborations and partnerships

Educational collaborations

The University's academic programmes in some areas benefit from the University's situation in the capital city.

Internationalisation

The highest profile in internationalisation is given to increasing the number of international students on campus. The University has an ambitious internationalisation plan through which the University appears to be seeking to take a more institutionally managed approach.

Offshore delivery

The University understands and is practising appropriate quality assurance arrangements with respect to the delivery of a University academic programme in Vietnam and to a twinning arrangement with the Malaysian government.

Commendations, recommendations and affirmations

Key: C = Commendations   R = Recommendations   A = Affirmations

NOTE: *The words 'the University' in each recommendation are intended to refer to the agency within Victoria University of Wellington that the University itself deems to be the one most appropriate to address and progress the recommendation.*

General

Victoria University of Wellington

C 1	p.2	The panel commends the University for the evidence of positive change in confidence since the time of the Cycle 3 academic audit in 2005, for the strengthening of academic processes, and for the staff awareness of the new strategic directions of the University.
C 2	p.2	The panel commends the University for the alignment of the *Strategic plan* with planning documents, and the extent of understanding and acceptance of the plan by the University community.

R 1   p.3   **The panel recommends that in support of enhancement initiative 701 which promotes the development of an integrated set of institutional data to inform decision-making to achieve the goals of the *Strategic plan*, the University, as a matter of urgency:**

- **develops key performance indicators and targets for all objectives relating to the goals of the *Strategic plan*,**

- **develops and embeds a more robust regime to monitor and measure progress towards objectives relating to the *Strategic plan*, and to monitor and measure the relevance, impact and effectiveness of new developments as well as continuing activities in research, learning, teaching and community engagement.**

Management structure

R 2   p.5   **The panel recommends that the University reviews Faculty and School management and administrative structures and responsibilities and the balance of tasks between the 'centre' and the Faculties and Schools in order to:**

- **protect the research interests of academics in managerial positions,**

- **ensure Heads of School can focus on the leadership and management of the academic work of their Schools, and**

- **gain efficiencies,**

Equity

A 1   p.7   *The panel affirms the University's intention (University enhancement initiative 301) to co-ordinate current endeavours to improve Māori and Pacific student retention.*

R 3   p.7   **The panel recommends that, in support of any findings that might result from the Māori and Pacific Equity Taskforce, the University:**

- **develops appropriate objectives and associated targets and indicators with respect to enhancing leadership and support for Māori and Pacific staff and students, and**

- **recognises that these two groups must be differentiated in the *Strategic plan* with Māori and Pacific peoples' needs being addressed within the equity framework, and Māori needs being specifically addressed under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.**

Learning and teaching

Learning and teaching plan

R 4   p.10   **The panel recommends that the University ensures the *Learning and teaching plan* (informed to be finalised by the time of the release of this report) includes a clearly defined process to monitor the implementation of the plan and to measure its effectiveness and its impact on the enhancement of learning and teaching and on the student learning experience across the University.**

Curriculum development

C 3   p.11   The panel commends the University for the development of the Victoria Plus Award and the Victoria International Leadership Programme and for the recognition of extra-curricular activities in preparing graduates for leadership positions in society.

Learning environment

C 4   p.13   The panel commends the University for the effectiveness and positive impact of the investment in the Library since the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit, with the enhancement to the physical environment, to electronic and other resources, and to the services in support of staff and student research, teaching and learning activities, as evidenced by the overall positive comments of those interviewed.

Learner support

C 5   p.15   The panel commends the University for the high quality of student learning support within the Student Services Group as evidenced by the high regard in which they are held by staff and students.

Research environment

Research quality and performance

C 6   p.18   The University is commended for the establishment and administration of the Research Trust Victoria which consolidates research funding; provides greater transparency; has enhanced both the processes for, and outcomes of, the management of research funding; and has restored confidence by improving the information researchers have about their funds.

Research students and research supervision

R 5   p.19   **The panel recommends that, in support of the intention (University enhancement initiative 202) to ensure a high level of co-ordination and co-operation among all faculties and Central Service Units in managing research postgraduate students, the University monitors the work of the Faculty of Graduate Research to ensure it assists Faculties and Schools to improve consistency in administration and to strengthen a student-focussed approach to PhD students and their progress.**

Tiriti o Waitangi

Māori students

R 6   p.22   **The panel recommends that the University includes a goal regarding Māori student retention and achievement in the *Strategic plan* and associated actions and targets in the relevant operational plans which would bring the issue to the attention of the University community and which would support and direct the responses of Faculties and Schools to this issue.**

University staff

Leadership

A 2   p.27   *The panel affirms the University's intention (University enhancement initiative 501) to maintain a database of those who have completed leadership programmes with a view to drawing on their motivation and skill in filling a range of leadership roles in the University as they emerge.*

Institutional quality assurance

Quality assurance framework

R 7   p.31   **The panel recommends that the University continues to develop and implement an appropriate institution-wide quality assurance infrastructure and institutional leadership for quality assurance and quality enhancement activities that:**

> ▪   **builds on and enhances those existing mechanisms and procedures that are effective in supporting a quality culture,**
>
> ▪   **facilitates ownership of, and engagement with, quality and continuous improvement activities by the whole University community, and**
>
> ▪   **provides assurance of institution-wide quality in research, teaching, learning and community engagement.**

Preamble

▪ The self-assessment Portfolio

In mid 2008, Victoria University of Wellington discussed the structure of the self-assessment Portfolio with the Unit, and it was confirmed that the University would follow the topics and activities in the indicative framework for Cycle 4 academic audits.[4] The Cycle 4 indicative framework asks questions about the output/outcome data and other evidence used to determine strengths and to judge progress, and about the mechanisms and processes used to monitor ongoing quality and provide input into continuous improvement. It also requires an evaluation of the relevance and effectiveness of evidence, mechanisms and processes.

The *Academic audit portfolio 2009* [Portfolio] as submitted by the University followed the agreed structure and provided material that addressed the indicative framework. The Portfolio was descriptive of mechanisms and processes, and was uneven in the evaluations of their relevance and effectiveness. More evidence was sought by the panel and was readily provided at the time of the site visit, and that evidence was supplemented by information elicited during interviews.

A summary report on progress on the 25 recommendations included in the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit report was provided with the Portolio. This was a significant programme for the University to achieve, and since the Cycle 3 academic audit, the University has also undertaken several major initiatives in addition to the recommendations – such as the development of a *Strategic plan*, and completion of the *Pathways to success* review of undergraduate and honours programmes and the resulting report which required significant curriculum changes. In its report on the Cycle 3 recommendations, the University indicated that 17 of them had been progressed and actions taken. Of the remaining eight recommendations in which development was still underway, three were about the implementation of plans and policies and the collection and analysis of data to provide effective monitoring of progress towards institutional goals and objectives; two were about the need for an appropriate insitution-wide infrastructure and leadership for quality assurance and quality enhancement activities and the dissemination of good practice; two were about student evaluation processes and feedback to students; and one was about benchmarking and performance indicators. During the site visit, further discussion of these issues enabled the panel to understand how these remaining eight recommendations are being addressed.

The Portfolio included 16 enhancement initiatives covering all areas, and set within the context of the challenges being faced by the University. The initiatives had arisen out of the work associated with the self-assessment review and the writing of the Portfolio. They were brought together by the Audit Working Group, were considered by the Senior Management Team and Academic Board, and were approved by those responsible for achieving them, in particular the Pro Vice-Chancellors and Directors of Central Service Units.

▪ The academic audit report

The structure of this report follows that of the indicative framework for Cycle 4 academic audits, with one adjustment – 'Academic and support staff' and 'Management and administrative support' are brought together under one heading, 'University staff'. *Appendix 1* of the report has the full list of enhancement initiatives, and the panel supports their advancement by the University. In the text of the report, the panel has included 'affirmations' only for those initiatives which, in its view, are of greatest significance to the future strategic direction of the University.

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[4] See *Appendix 3* of this report for the framework for Cycle 4 academic audits.

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General

1.1   Victoria University of Wellington

The Victoria University of Wellington undertakes research and delivers its academic programmes on four campuses in Wellington City, administered by seven Faculties:

- Kelburn Campus: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (12,395 enrolments)[5]
  Faculty of Science and Faculty of Engineering (2,604),

- Te Aro Campus: Faculty of Architecture and Design (1,380),

- Pipitea Campus: Faculty of Law (1,941),
  Faculty of Commerce and Administration (5,028), and

- Karori Campus: Faculty of Education (959).

Schools are the primary organisational units within Faculties which are responsible for the research and the teaching of academic programmes. The New Zealand School of Music is a joint venture with Massey University. As well, the University operates off-shore at the University of Economics in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and has a twinning arrangement with the Ministry of Education, Malaysia.

The mission of the University is to play a leading role in shaping New Zealand's future by:

- *adding significantly to the knowledge and understanding of natural phenomena, society, culture and technology through research, teaching and interdisciplinary perspectives,*

- *engaging with local, national and international communities in creating, disseminating and applying knowledge that has scholarly or societal impact,*

- *developing graduates with skills in leadership, communication, and critical and creative thinking.*

The University's special character is embedded in the interplay of four factors:

- *a set of interdisciplinary strengths, emanating from long-standing disciplinary strengths, applied to addressing complex problems and issues,*

- *a demonstrable record of successful collaboration,*

- *a supportive community of higher learning,*

- *the unique advantage and opportunities that stem from being located in Wellington, the capital city of New Zealand.*

The 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit report provided the University with 25 recommendations, and the response to the audit report had been a key driver of change. The self-assessment Portfolio

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[5]   The 2008 statistics taken from the *Annual report 2008*. Figures include enrolments by students in more than one Faculty and are therefore greater than total enrolled students.

for the 2009 audit reported that action had been taken on the majority of the recommendations, with development still underway on eight of them. Observations on the outstanding recommendations are made at appropriate points in this report. Nevertheless, much has been achieved, notably the investment in the Library to address serious shortfalls identified in the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit. Additionally, there have been significant Universtiy initiatives not driven by the report, notably the *Strategic plan 2009-2014* [*Strategic plan*], a new Faculty of Graduate Research to bring greater consistency to PhD candidature, and the creation of a new position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to bring leadership to learning and teaching.

Thus, there has been considerable change and progress in the last four years, and it was evident to the panel that the audit site visit was at a time when the University was in the middle of a long-term change project. Although most Cycle 3 recommendations have been addressed, it was not clear to the panel as to how the relevance, impact and effectiveness of changes arising from the recommendations are being measured and monitored, and the panel encourages the University to put a regime in place as soon as possible to monitor the recent and new developments as part of the ongoing business of assessing institutional performance. However, while some of the Cycle 3 recommendations are still in the developmental stage, the panel recognises that the University made conscious decisions about its priorities in the way it addressed the Cycle 3 report. With changes outlined above, and after evaluating the written materials and the information provided in interviews, the panel is of the view that the University is moving forward in a measured and methodical way and should succeed in its programme of development.

Commendation

C 1 **The panel commends the University for the evidence of positive change in confidence since the time of the Cycle 3 academic audit in 2005, for the strengthening of academic processes, and for the staff awareness of the new strategic directions of the University.**

1.2 Strategic plan

The *Strategic plan* was developed in consultation with the University community and external stakeholders and includes the University's values, mission and goals. The *Strategic plan* is high level and directional (rather than directive), with broad goals, a representative range of actions and some qualitiative measures of success. It provides a clearer identity for the University and a strong sense of community, the context for the ongoing work of the University, and an indication of where the University must improve. The goals and actions could well require further development as the 2009-2014 timeframe progresses. From discussions during the site visit, the panel came to the view that the *Strategic plan* is providing strategic direction for the University as a whole, is a platform for Faculties, Schools and units, and is informing other planning documents. There appears to be good buy-in by the University community which, it was evident, appreciate being aware of the high-level expectations of the University and the pressures it faces.

Commendation

C 2 **The panel commends the University for the alignment of the *Strategic plan* with planning documents, and the extent of understanding and acceptance of the plan by the University community.**

The plan itself does not contain targets or measure of progress, but the *Investment plan* as agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission has key performance indicators which are aligned with the goals of the *Strategic plan*. Key performance indicators are used to report to Council, reported against six-monthy by the Deans, and reported in the University's *Annual report*. The self-assessment Portfolio included a University enhancement initiative (701) **to develop further an integrated set of institutional data to inform decision-making to achieve the goals of the University Strategic plan, and at the same time provide data for performance indicators for external reporting**. At the time of the site visit, the panel was told that the University was working on establishing specific targets for the *Strategic plan*. The panel was not clear where particular datasets were held and whether the central administration had access to all data held by Faculties. From interviews, the panel came to the view that the University must have access to, and make much more deliberate use of, all data collected throughout the University in institutional-level decision making processes, especially those decisions that lead to the enhancement of learning and teaching and research.

Recommendation

R 1 **The panel recommends that in support of enhancement initiative 701 which promotes the development of an integrated set of institutional data to inform decision-making to achieve the goals of the *Strategic plan*, the University, as a matter of urgency:**

- **develops key performance indicators and targets for all objectives relating to the goals of the *Strategic plan*,**

- **develops and embeds a more robust regime to monitor and measure progress towards objectives relating to the *Strategic plan*, and to monitor and measure the relevance, impact and effectiveness of new developments as well as continuing activities in research, learning, teaching and community engagement.**

1.3   Management structure

The **Senior Management Team**, who advise the **Vice-Chancellor**, include the Deputy and Pro Vice-Chancellors as well as the **Chief Operating Officer**, and the **Directors** of **Finance** and **Human Resources**.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellors have pan-University responsibilities. The position of **Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)** was created in 2005 and is supported by the **Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Research)** to provide senior institutional leadership in developing the University's research capability. A parallel structure in learning and teaching was implemented in January 2009 with the appointment of a **Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)** – with responsibilities also for Equity – supported by the existing **Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic)**, thus bringing a better balance between the two core activities of research and teaching. The position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor was disestablished on the retirement of the incumbent with many of the administrative areas of that role becoming the responsibility of the Chief Operating Officer.

Other positions with pan-University responsibility are the **Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori)** and **Pro Vice-Chancellor (International)**. As with all such positions, they provide leadership and have responsibilities for defining institutional policy in their areas of responsibility.

Implementation of such policies and other intitiatives, however, are undertaken by the Faculties in which research, teaching and learning take place.

The University has seven teaching Faculties, each headed by a **Dean** assisted by Faculty managers, with responsibilities for administering the academic programmes. Four Pro Vice-Chancellors are also Deans of Faculties, and a fifth Pro Vice-Chancellor has three Faculties, being Dean of one of them, and being supported by two further Deans for the other two Faculties. Faculties have boards and committees, variously named, responsible for academic matters (for example, Academic Learning and Teaching Committee, Academic Development Committee, Curriculum Committee) and, similarly, committees responsible for research matters (Research Committee, Research Development Committee, Research and Postgraduate Committee), and many Faculties have Associate and/or Deputy Deans when the scale and needs of Faculties require additional leadership.

The allocation of resources to the Schools within these Faculties is the responsibility of the five **Pro Vice-Chancellors**. Pro Vice-Chancellors lead, facilitate and monitor the implementation of the *Strategic plan* in accordance with Faculty and School plans which interpret the *Strategic plan* in ways best suited to their discipline areas. The Pro Vice-Chancellors see the development of research as a pre-eminent focus and one of the major changes in recent years. Curriculum review generally, and degree changes specifically, have been necessary to ensure academic programmes maintain their relevance and facilitate student choice.

Each Faculty comprises several **Schools**, and there are 27 Schools across the University. Schools arise from the bringing together of disciplinary units of similar interests, or may arise from 'strategic alliances' around shared interests. Heads of School, assisted by School Managers, carry heavy workloads and have a large range of responsibilities. School administration may not replicate Faculty administration, but in many aspects there appears to be duplicate responsibilities with the Schools managing the day-to-day operational activities associated with the delivery and teaching of academic progammes, and the daily management of staff, budgets and facilities. Some School Managers in particular were of the view that the processes associated with administration were unnecessarily complex and could be simplified in ways that might avoid duplication of effort, and remove 'low value' activities and tasks.

Additional to the seven research and teaching **Faculties**, there are two pan-University 'virtual' Faculties – the **Faculty of Graduate Research** which administers doctoral research candidature, headed by a Dean; and **Toihuarewa** mostly comprising Māori academic staff, headed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori).

From documentation and interviews, the panel came to the view that the management structure appears rather complex, and that the devolution to Faculties and Schools in so many areas (discussed more fully in section 1.4) might require reconsideration of the layers of management. The Heads of Schools interviewed reported heavy workloads.

Recommendation

R 2   **The panel recommends that the University reviews Faculty and School management and administrative structures and responsibilities and the balance of tasks between the 'centre' and the Faculties and Schools in order to:**

- **protect the research interests of academics in managerial positions,**

- **ensure Heads of School can focus on the leadership and management of the academic work of their Schools, and**

- **gain efficiencies.**

The management team is supported by a well-informed **Council**. Council members reported involvement in the development of the *Strategic plan* but had less input into the *Investment plan* (required by, and agreed with, the Tertiary Education Commission) which was considered appropriate as the *Investment plan* builds out of the *Strategic plan*. The Council sees the two plans and annual report as interlinked. The Council has least input into the *Annual report*. The Council looks to a number of sources for indicators of performance – such as programme review reports, levels of research publications and academic awards, and Academic Board minutes and papers.

The Council was satisfied with its induction processes and regularly surveyed its members about the performance of the Council. Minutes of Council meetings indicate that the Council is very much involved in discussions about the work and operations of the University, and seeks additional assurance where necessary. The Council is well aware of risks facing the University with the increasing numbers of postgraduate and Engineering students (both types of students more costly to support), the upskilling and lifting of research performance in the Faculty of Education, the 'dramatic improvement' in research output required of the University, maintaining good resourcing to ensure high quality teaching, and attracting high quality academic staff to the University over the next generation.

1.4   Devolution

The University acknowledges in its self-assessment Portfolio that while there are clear responsibilities and expectations of compliance with policies, procedures and guidelines throughout the University, devolved responsibility in a high-trust professional environment does not, of itself, guarantee that policies and procedures are being complied with, or guidelines followed. At present, the central administration monitors for trends rather than exceptions. The panel was informed on a number of occasions and from a range of sources that the University is highly devolved, and was informed of the variability of practices and interpretations of policy.

The panel understands the University's need to centralise some processes, and notes the introduction of a pan-University approach to implementing policies and plans in research, learning and teaching and administration (particularly through the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellors and the Chief Operating Officer) in order to align practices without losing the strengths of devolution. In order to mitigate risk, the University needs to consider the degree of variation which is acceptable.

Administrators from Faculties and Schools interviewed by the panel viewed the balance between devolution and centralisation in a variety of ways, with some calling for a stronger institutional culture which they considered to be weak. For some administrators, student orientation was no

longer meaningful when the University is split among four campuses, each with distinctive combinations of Faculties and disciplinary cultures.

It was evident that the University acknowledges that some initiatives need to be driven both at a central and at Faculty/School level. For example, the recent internal round of Performance-Based Research Fund appraisal was University-driven, but the follow-up, providing support for staff to improve their scores, must be the responsibility of the Faculties and Schools.

The panel heard how devolution had served the University well in the recent past with initiatives by individual Faculties and Schools moving the University forward, but now this needed to be reconsidered. The University intends that there should be stronger linkages between the academic activities of Faculties and the institutional strategic direction, and it was hoped that the successful implementation of the *Strategic plan* across the University would help. Deans, for example, acknowledged the difficulty in changing the culture and attitudes of people outside of management, and the difficulties of gaining buy-in to the strategic messages with those who worked outside of the administration.

In summary, devolution can provide, and has provided, an effective approach for the University in implementing change. However, in a more resource constrained environment, the University will have to balance devolution with ensuring efficiency in its systems, processes, planning and decision making to make best use of its resources. That is likely to require the University to review the extent of devolution in the current external environment, especially now that much of the 'surge' of internal change has been implemented.

1.5   Equity

The issue of equity has become a responsibility of the newly-appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). An Equity Strategy Group has been established to plan and consider infrastructure around equity issues for staff and students. An equity framework has been developed and a plan will be in place by the end of 2009. The panel noted that this was an important and necessary initiative, given the absence of an existing plan, structure or systematic reporting mechanism,

The panel was told that the most important groups who come under the equity umbrella are Māori students and staff, Pacific students and staff, students and staff with disabilities (including those who have impairments to sight or hearing, mental health conditions, injuries, medical conditions or specific learning disabilities), men or women in professions or disciplines where barriers exist to participation or where they are under-represented, and students and people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The University Senior Management is concerned about the lack of improvement in recruitment, retention and achievement statistics for Māori and Pacific students who make up 7.9 and 4.7 percent respectively of the total student enrolment. It has dedicated funding to the work of a recently established Māori and Pacific Equity Taskforce, convened by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) with the support of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the Pacific community. Māori and Pacific have similar yet distinctive needs, and it should be noted that there are some areas where there have been considerable achievements by Māori students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Affirmation

A 1   The panel affirms the University's intention (University enhancement initiative 301) to co-ordinate current endeavours to improve Māori and Pacific student retention.

It is recognised within the general issue of 'equity' that Pacific students and staff need more support. There is a Pacific Support Co-ordinator for Pacific students in need of assistance who self refer or who are referred by Faculty staff, and the Co-ordinator refers students to the appropriate mentoring or learning support section. There is no body for Pacific staff comparable to Toihuarewa for Māori staff (see section 4.3 of this report) and Pacific staff and students rely heavily on the generosity of Pacific people within the University community for support.

The panel was told that senior Pacific staff willingly undertake networking and pastoral care beyond their own disciplines which places them under personal pressure, and which also impacts on their time for research. While the University recognises the need for support, the panel could not find any indication as to the intentions of the University with respect to enhancing the leadership and support of Pacific students and staff, and it is of the view that the University should signal its intentions with the inclusion of an objective (with associated targets and indicators) in the *Strategic plan*.   There are no objectives for either Māori or Pacific in the *Strategic plan*, although there is a statement of commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Recommendation

R 3   The panel recommends that, in support of any findings that might result from the Māori and Pacific Equity Taskforce, the University:

- ▪ **develops appropriate objectives and associated targets and indicators with respect to enhancing leadership and support for Māori and Pacific staff and students, and**
- ▪ **recognises that these two groups must be differentiated in the *Strategic plan* with Māori and Pacific peoples' needs being addressed within the equity framework, and Māori needs being specifically addressed under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.**

Of the other areas of priority in the equity area, students with disabilities find assistance with computer hardware and software to be the biggest call. Disability Support Services provides assistance with this and it also administers disability awareness courses for staff to assist them understand the circumstances and needs of students with disabilities. Disabilities Support Services consider that it is well in control of services for students, but that staff with disabilities within the University are not catered for adequately at present.

The University has been offering a 'women in leadership' programme, and the panel was informed that the programme was relevant and helpful. The number of women in senior positions is being monitored by the University with hopes expressed that in the future more women will be able to put themselves forward for consideration.

2

Learning and teaching

2.1   Goal and commitment

The University's goal for teaching and learning is:

Strengthen Victoria's high quality research-led learning and teaching environment, and reward and celebrate learning and teaching excellence in all its forms.   [SP 2][6]

The University is committed to:

- ▪   *complete implementation of* Pathways to success *and embed new practice in teaching and learning,*

- ▪   *progressively implement one or more internationally benchmarked instruments of student engagement and achievement to raise awareness of areas that require further exploration and action in teaching and learning,*

- ▪   *implement relevant recommendations from programme reviews and from the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit academic audits,*

- ▪   *establish teaching projects (courses or collaborations across courses) that explore integrated approaches to academic problems using perspectives from different disciplines,*

- ▪   *acknowledge the importance of teaching excellence and maintain the status and importance of local and national tertiary teaching excellence awards.*

The University's goal for the student learning experience is to:

Engage students as active and lifelong members of an inclusive and supportive community of higher learning through an outstanding academic, social and cultural experience that equips them to make a significant contribution to local, national and international communities.   [SP 3]

The University is committed to:

- ▪   *ensure that the University offers a first-rate student experience through high quality and challenging academic programmes, excellent facilities, responsive student services, and opportunities for stimulating social and cultural experiences,*

- ▪   *recognise the different learning needs of students by using a variety of teaching approaches and showing sensitivity to cultural issues.*

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[6]   *Strategic plan 2009-2014*

2.2   Learning and teaching plan

The 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit report noted that a *Learning and teaching plan* had been prepared by the Office of the then Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), discussed and approved that year, although it had been unclear how the plan would be implemented.   A Learning and Teaching Committee had been disbanded at the end of 2004 in favour of a network of responsive and flexible learning and teaching delivery mechanisms, and at the time of the 2005 site visit a new committee was to be established and an implementation plan developed. There were recommendations around the linking of the plan to budgets (R8), clarification of the accountability for learning and teaching (R9) and appropriate relevant performance measures and indicators in the learning and teaching plan to chart progress towards the achievement of the plan's objectives (R10).

It was evident to the panel that, after the Cycle 3 academic audit, the *Pathways to success* review and report and subsequent curriculum changes had been prioritised and that, as a consequence, much has been achieved in programme restructure and curriculum development. The University recognised that there is now an urgent need to support the implementation of the restructured curriculum through attention to continuous improvement in learning and teaching to gain more consistency in the learning experiences of students. The appointment of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) is a recognition of the need for academic leadership in this area, and the subsequent establishment of a high-level Learning and Teaching Strategy Group by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor will lead to the development of a *Learning and teaching plan* by the time of the public release of this report.

The panel considers that this is an important and urgently needed development and encourages the University to capitalise on the positive things that have been happening within the University as the plan is discussed and developed. Of particular significance will be the enhancement of the processes for the dissemination of existing and future good practice in teaching and learning, and for the monitoring of the implementation of the plan.

Recommendation

R 4   **The panel recommends that the University ensures that the *Learning and teaching plan* (informed to be finalised by the time of the release of this report) includes a clearly defined process to monitor the implementation of the plan and to measure its effectiveness and its impact on the enhancement of learning and teaching and on the student learning experience across the University.**

2.3   Curriculum development

Pathways to success 2007 led to reforms in the undergraduate programme, designed to achieve four goals: a greater transparency and consistency in the structure and outcomes of degree programmes; clearer communication to students about pathway options; defining and fostering good practice in teaching and learning; and establishing evaluation measures in order to know what is being achieved.   Arising from this, the degrees of Bachelor of Commerce and Administration (BCA), Bachelor of Science (BSc) and Bachelor of Arts (BA) were restructured, with some agreement on point values of courses. This, in turn, prompted reviews of the content and delivery in a number of courses. The general trend has been to broaden undergraduate education, allowing, for example, a major to be included from another Faculty.

At the time of the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit, the University intended to 'map' the development of new graduate attributes including leadership, communication and critical and creative thinking onto programmes of study and to align these with course learning outcomes and graduate attributes. The process of curriculum change in recent years has required the embedding of graduate attributes, and it is intended that academic programme reviews will monitor the achievement and assessment of attributes in programme and course delivery. In the view of the panel, the introduction of graduate attributes has been an example where diverse and devolved Faculties have been able to respond to a centralised and university-wide initiative in a consistent and useful manner.

The attributes of leadership and communication that are essential ingredients in the graduate attributes are further developed through two programmes. The Victoria Plus Award gives formal recognition to students' extra-curricular activities, especially those that promote leadership skills and have elements of social responsibility. The Victoria International Leadership Programmes involves seminars, presentations and activities that focus on intercultural awareness and international knowledge. Several of the students interviewed had participated in the programmes and had found them very useful as preparation for the world of work.

Commendation

C 3   **The panel commends the University for the development of the Victoria Plus Award and the Victoria International Leadership Programme and for the recognition of extra-curricular activities in preparing graduates for leadership positions in society.**

2.4   Learning environment

Course information

The successful delivery of courses and programmes requires student access to information about course planning and course requirements. The *myVictoria* portal is a secure web portal for students and staff to access web-based e-mail, University information, news, the Library, teaching and research information. In identifying two related enhancement initiatives around the ***provision for academic staff and students with access to progress information and course planning facilities online*** (enhancement initiative 702) and the ***establishment of a system to manage efficiently and consistently the production of information for students and staff about courses and enrolment*** (enhancement initiative 703), the University recognises the need for improvements to accessing information and to ensuring the efficient use of resources.

Challenges to teaching quality

Academic staff identified a number of challenges facing the University at this time in ensuring an engaging learning environment. Of particular note was the growth of class sizes and the impact on workload and the interaction between teachers and students; the ability of teachers to nurture low-level performers and stimulate high-level performers; and the ability to cope simultaneously with major and rapid change in recent years, the management of better learning spaces, and issues around staff retention. The University recognises the importance of teaching quality in the *Strategic plan*, and has set itself two initiatives arising from the self-assessment associated with this audit. The panel noted, however, that interviews with students indicated that they were generally positive about their learning experience and the relevance of academic programmes,

One (enhancement initiative 102) is for the ***development and adoption of a set of defined responsibilities in teaching at University, Faculty, School and programme level, that are aligned with the University statement of quality in teaching; and the integration of existing policies and processes with reference to the statement of quality in teaching***. The University has reported to the panel that the enhancement initiative is to align existing descriptions with a new statement of teaching quality, and as such it represents added value to what is already there.

The other (enhancement initiative 101) is that, ***in consultation with academic staff, the University foster reflection on teaching and innovative practice by reviewing promotions guidelines and by establishing a systematic process for responding to student feedback***. The panel noted that the University at the time of the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit had as one of its objectives to 'achieve distinction as New Zealand's highest quality teaching and learning university',[7] and the report resulting from that audit contained a recommendation (R18) in support of the University's own proposed initiative around the enhanced interpretation and use of results of evaluations. The University has reported to the panel that the use of student feedback has been reviewed and so has the application of the promotion criteria. The University is not convinced that these are yet as good as they can be, and so the enhancement initiative is intended to go further with the process. The panel is of the view that a culture of reflective teaching and innovative practice is necessary if highest quality teaching is to support and enhance students' learning.

The panel noted that both these enhancement initiatives demonstrated that the University's recent prioritisation of research and curriculum change had left a significant agenda for change in relation to teaching and learning. The panel recognises the challenges in achieving these two initiatives; they are fundamental in improving learning and teaching practices at the University, and they should be dealt with as part of the programme of change linked to the current development and implementation of the *Learning and teaching plan*.

The Library

The most valuable and valued support for research, learning and teaching in a university is the Library. The 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit report noted the deficiencies of the Library, and the planned enhancement projects alongside the developmental and strategic planning of the Library. The panel recommended (R23):

> *that the University indicates clearly its priority with respect to the provision of resources to the Library that will enable it to provide the hardcopy and electronic resources and services required in order for the university to achieve its stated learning and teaching goals and objectives.*

Since the time of the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit, the Library has been a strategic priority with the University significantly increasing resources to meet research, teaching and learning needs. The panel supports the strategic approach of the University Librarian to the provision of quality Library services. The Library's strategic plan prioritises relationship building and engagement with the academic communities, and provides a framework for feedback and action as well as looking to improve communications. A strong network with other Wellington-based libraries – public, national, parliamentary, Massey University – has been developed. Work has begun on Library redevelopment and a Campus Hub.

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[7]   *Strategic plan 2005-2015*, objective 5.

In interviews, the panel heard that the substantial increases in funding had allowed appropriate investment in e-resources, and in enhancing the collection. There is a policy of equity of access across all five sites – the Central Library on Kelburn Campus, two libraries on Pipitea Campus (Law, and Commerce) and one library on each of Te Aro and Karori Campuses. There are new teams within the Library to support research and postgraduate students across the Library units at all campuses. There are also Faculty teams, Library subject teams and on-line subject guides. The Library has involvement in the formal processes associated with new programme and course approvals. Library services are surveyed by students regularly and feedback used to enhance services.

Students interviewed by the panel were pleased with the improvements to the Library, the quality of the Library services, the responsive Library Helpdesk and the expansion in the provision of study spaces.

Commendation

C 4   **The panel commends the University for the effectiveness and positive impact of the investment in the Library since the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit, with the enhancement to the physical environment, to electronic and other resources, and to the services in support of staff and student research, teaching and learning activities, as evidenced by the overall positive comments of those interviewed.**

Information technology

Information Technology Services emphasises service to students and staff. Students expect a highly accessible information technology environment. Therefore access to the internet through an improved wireless network, the provision of self-service kiosks, the development of flexible delivery and flexible learning spaces, and the provision of a collaborative environment with access to teachers have become priorities. The Libraries on the four campuses provide wireless access.

Blackboard is the learning management system used by the University; the hardware is supported by Information Technology Services; the technical side for use by students is supported by Central Student Administration; and the pedagogical use by staff is supported by the University Teaching Development Centre. The Library administers the Blackboard Helpdesk with specific Blackboard questions, referring students to the lecturers for answers to questions on content.

The panel noted that the self-assessment Portfolio reported that 58 percent of all courses use Blackboard, but was told in interview that that represented 85 percent of all *taught* courses. The University is aware that students expect Blackboard support for all courses, although a significant proportion of staff do not use the facilities and it was claimed that not all courses might suit the application. It is not formally required for courses to utilise Blackboard, but student feedback has encouraged many staff into using the system. Some staff admitted Blackboard is used for efficiency rather than pedagogy, with Blackboard used as a repository rather than as a fully-embraced learning management system. It would appear there is considerable reliance on personal sharing of technology expertise among staff members.

The panel was not clear as to whether there has been enough strategic thinking by the University community around learning technologies generally. The panel understands that there is to be a formal project in the next two years to establish how staff would like to use Blackboard, and to

evaluate the range of requirements and experiences of staff and students which may well lead to a more strategic approach. The proposed *Learning and teaching plan* may also assist with this.

Student representation

Students were involved in the discussions associated with the development of new curriculum through the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association representation on appropriate groups and committees. Class representatives receive training and, where effective, offer an avenue for quality assurance with issues often resolved early at that level to the benefit of students' learning experience. The Students' Association told the panel that it was confident that membership on Faculty Board and Academic Board and other committees facilitates the hearing of the student voice on academic matters.

Ngai Tauira Māori, the Victoria University Māori students' association, provides services to all Māori students on campus, catering to their specific educational, cultural, political and social needs. Ngai Tauira keeps a good working relationship with the Students' Association.

Students interviewed were generally satisfied with the access to, and administration of grievance procedures. Overall, formal grievance procedures were considered to be good and efficient, although some students interviewed reported that informal procedures sometimes took longer to reach a conclusion than perhaps they should.

2.5   Learner support

The *Student Services Group* brings together all agencies that provide support for students during their time at the University – in particular *Student Learning Support Service*, *Student Health*, *Counselling*, *Accommodation*, *Kaiwawao Māori*, *Manaaki Pipihinga* for Māori and Pacific students, *Disability Support*, *Career Development and Employment*. There is a coherent, consistent and planned approach to the provision of services, and the Group facilitates a holistic approach. For example, Career Development and Employment is involved in student recruitment, providing information to prospective students as to the most appropriate tertiary provider and academic programme for various careers opportunities.

Given the devolved nature of the University, the services are proactive in seeking to work with Faculties and their students. Faculty Advisers often refer students to appropriate services within the Group, and the panel was informed that student users are often referred by peers rather than by the students finding information for themselves on the website or through orientation materials.

The Student Services Group maintains good processes for the collection and analysis of data to measure the impact and continuing relevance of its provision. The panel was given evidence of the monitoring of the effectivness of services with comparative data on, for example, retention, completion times and progression into postgraduate programmes, which indicate where numbers are dropping and where interventions are required to reverse trends. Measures of success include increased take-up of provision by students, putting increased pressure on accommodation for student services. Monitoring of the relevance of services through surveys of students and Schools shows that the services are meeting the needs of students, and confirms that face-to-face contact and support is preferred. Meetings of all agencies within the Group assist in making the most of synergies and consistency in approach to common goals and objectives. Student Services are well used by students and appreciated by academic staff. Students interviewed by the panel, who have used the services, expressed satisfaction, although the panel was told that

overbooking of services can lead to delays in receiving attention. Overall, the Student Services Group is a good example of central services working well in support of the teaching and learning responsibilities and the general student experience within Faculties.

Commendation

C 5 **The panel commends the University for the high quality of student learning support within the Student Services Group as evidenced by the high regard in which they are held by staff and students.**

On the academic front, the Student Learning Support Service is important in providing assistance in developing academic learning strategies, study skills materials, language support, academic writing, mathematics and statistics, and examination techniques. Kaiwawao Māori provides wide ranging assistance for students of Māori descent. The Manaaki Pihipihinga mentoring programme for Māori and Pacific students is available in the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Commerce and Administration, with mentoring arrangements with trained students. Te Rōpu Āwhina – now in its tenth year – provides academic support for Māori and Pacific students in the Faculties of Science, Architecture and Design and Engineering. Students spoke of the value of the Āwhina programme, and some who were mentored, in turn, become mentors. The University might consider how the whanau element in the Āwhina programme might be incorporated into other support programmes, and might also consider how mentors can be better supported given that mentoring involves a significant time commitment.

The panel was interested in learning of the collaborative approach by the Māori student support services to the support of Pacific students. Support services for Māori and Pacific students are employing Māori and Pacific graduates of the University, and people involved are now working together much more. Such services aim to support Māori and Pacific students to become professionals in those areas that contribute to Māori and Pacific community development.

The panel was pleased to hear that, for several years, the Student Recruitment and Course Advice Group has operated a Community Outreach programme for Māori and Pacific students, going into schools and providing students with the skills to cope with tertiary study. This is accompanied by programmes to assist students make the transition into the University during the first six weeks enrolment. Student Services also supports staff to understand the needs of students.

Victoria International is responsible for liaison with prospective international students, and international students interviewed praised the level of service and commitment they received. Once in the University, student learning support is provided by Student Services. Pastoral care is the responsibility of Faculties and, as with other aspects of student care for all students at the University, international students interviewed reported variable experiences.

3

Research environment

3.1   Goal and commitment

The University's goal for research is:

Dramatically improve Victoria's overall research performance by focusing resources on developing and rewarding research excellence, particularly in areas of disciplinary and interdisciplinary strengths, and creating new knowledge that has major social, economic or scholarly impact. [SP 1]

The University is committed to:

▪ *invest in improving the research performance of a selected number of areas of disciplinary or interdisciplinary strength, and adopt strategies for weaker areas that will either improve research performance or reduce activity.*

3.2   Research quality and performance

The University appreciates that there is work to be done on research performance which placed the University fourth among New Zealand universities in the 2006 Research-Based Performance Fund scores. The *Strategic plan* requires a 'dramatic' improvement. The latest research strategic plan is dated October 2007, and it predates the present *Strategic plan*. The panel was told that it was able to be easily aligned with the *Strategic plan*, as are existing research plans across the University, but there was no evidence that this was occurring. The University should complete this alignment as soon as possible.

From interviews during the site visit, the panel was assured that there had been a growing awareness of the need to strengthen the research culture of the University. The panel was told that staff are increasingly aware of their own performance, and there were signs of more team research being undertaken, although there are still a number of staff for whom research is not a priority.

Central to the institutional drive in research is the Research Office, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) who works strategically with the faculties through the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Research) who, in turn, provides operational support by working with Associate Deans who have responsibilities for implementing research policies through their respective Faculty plans.

The Research Performance and Management Unit is responsible for research information, policy, performance and evaluation including the Performance-Based Research Fund, resource allocation, ethics processes, management systems, and committee administration.

Up to 2006, research application and funding processes were administered by Victoria Link Ltd whose primary function was to manage and commercialise University intellectual property. In 2006, research application and funding processes were moved to the Research Office where Portfolio Managers work with researchers in finding funding sources and submitting

applications. At the same time, the Research Trust of Victoria University of Wellington was established to manage funds acquired for, and committed to, research and scholarship. The cost of the administration of the Research Trust is carried by the University and not the Trust. This has allowed the funds to be managed on a project basis. External research revenues have increased significantly in recent years, and improved online access to research accounts allows better information and better efficiency in managing funds, with residual funds and interest earned being applied to other research projects.

The panel was told that the Research Trust system had helped restore academics' faith in research funding processes, fund security and fund management. The panel was assured that the 'ring-fencing' of funding helped restore confidence in the use of research funds for actual research. Improved quality of financial information to researchers has allowed proper management of their research funds, has improved transparency in the administration of funds, and has led to a better centralised knowledge of research activities.

Commendation

C 6 **The University is commended for the establishment and administration of the Research Trust Victoria which consolidates research funding; provides greater transparency; has enhanced both the processes for, and outcomes of, the management of research funding; and has restored confidence by improving the information researchers have about their funds.**

Two recent initiatives reflect the high focus on the importance of research across the University. Firstly, research performance reviews of schools, units or programmes were introduced recently and are designed to complement academic programme reviews. They provide commentary on research within the unit from the perspective of potential funders or end-users, the internal structure of the unit, research productivity, postgraduate research, and Māori-related research. The reviews assist the University in assuring that units are undertaking research for the right purposes, and not just because of external pressure. In gaining value for the investment into these reviews, the University has an enhancement initiative (201) to *review policies and processes to support individual research performance, taking account of the recommendations of the research reviews*. The panel supports this initiative.

Secondly, the University has undertaken in 2009 an internal Performance-Based Research Fund round. It is hoped by the University that the results of that exercise will provide guidance on further practical steps to be undertaken at Faculty and School level to help 'dramatically improve Victoria's overall research performance' as required by the University's *Strategic plan*.

3.3   Research students and research supervision

In May 2007, the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit conducted an exercise on behalf of the Ministry of Education to monitor the admission and supervision of international PhD students in accordance with an agreement between the Government and the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee. The report to the University identified a variability of approach to compliance with the University's policies and procedures associated with Faculties' responsibilities for final sign off at admission and for administering the six-monthly reports.

In the same year, the University conducted a wider review of PhD administration, and the 2007 *Research strategy* identified significant issues arising from the devolution of postgraduate processes to Faculties. The issues included inconsistent application of policies and quality

control measures; impediments to recruiting students because of the lack of centralised web-based application processes; and a disconnection of the centralised scholarship processes from admissions procedures.

To address these concerns, a Faculty of Graduate Research was established with effect from 2009 to bring consistency to the administration of PhD candidates and to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of services, a positive student experience, successful completion, better and more consistent support, and enhanced examination processes. The Faculty is overseen by a Dean, and the Faculty's key relationships are with Heads of Schools and/or PhD liaison personnel within Schools. The intention is to co-ordinate the activities of faculties and Central Service Units in developing a coherent management system. This will include a web presence, the linking of scholarships to PhD applications, and University-wide induction for students. It is intended that this will bring efficiencies, greater effectiveness and consistency across the University, as well as a greater knowledge of postgraduate research activity.

The panel recognised that the new Faculty was just over seven months old at the time of the site visit, and was not surprised that the centralised tracking of PhD students is still bedding down with a variety of attitudes to the new requirements across Faculties. In 2006, a Minimum Resources Agreement was signed with the Postgraduate Students' Association, but from the interviews with postgraduate students, it appears that there is a variability of practice with regard to the provision of resources and support. The panel supports the creation of the Faculty of Graduate Research, and the University's intention to develop strong working relationships with Faculties. The panel encourages the Faculty in its efforts to increase its visibility and capacity, especially if it is to administer the larger numbers of PhD students that will be required as part of the University's desire to increase its research outcomes. The impact and effectiveness of the Faculty in achieving its objectives will be evaluated after two years of operation, and it is important for the University to have monitoring processes in place to assist such a review.

Recommendation

R 5 **The panel recommends that, in support of the intention (University enhancement initiative 202) to ensure a high level of co-ordination and co-operation among all faculties and Central Service Units in managing research postgraduate students, the University monitors the work of the Faculty of Graduate Research to ensure it assists Faculties and Schools to improve consistency in administration and to strengthen a student-focussed approach to PhD students and their progress.**

3.4 Teaching and learning within a research environment.

The interdependence of research and teaching is a statutory requirement for New Zealand universities, and the research-teaching nexus was subject to audit during the 2000 Cycle 2 academic audit. There was much discussion on the research-teaching nexus at the time of that audit, but interviews during this site visit suggested that there had been limited subsequent institutional discussion of the issue, although it has been included as a specific item in the terms of reference for academic programme reviews.

The nexus is important to the University. The *Strategic plan* aims to strengthen the University's 'high quality research-led learning and teaching environment' and Schools and Faculties are required to report against this goal. The University Teaching Development Centre reported that the content of its workshops on teaching is focussed on research-informed teaching in all cases. As noted several times in this report, the University has placed an emphasis on research and then

curriculum, and now is focussing on enhancing the learning and teaching environment. The research-teaching nexus was discussed in interviews only briefly, and there was an acknowledgement that it would be appropriate to revitalise discussions on the nexus at this time.

4

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

4.1 Commitment

The University's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is as follows.

The [University] *Treaty of Waitangi Statute is the formal expression of the University's commitment to Māori as tangata whenua and Treaty partners.*

Victoria is committed to:

- *Māori student recruitment, retention and achievement,*

- *Māori research excellence with the potential for significant social, economic and scholarly impacts,*

- *the contribution of Matauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) to scholarship across disciplines,*

- *building long-term and positive relationships with Māori stakeholders,*

- *building Māori staff capability,*

- *increasing the capability of all staff to engage with Māori interests,*

- *the contribution of Te Reo Māori and Tikanga Māori to the culture of the University.*

The University's goal for equity is:

Provide an inclusive and representative environment for staff and students that is conducive to equity of opportunity for participation and success. [SP 8]

4.2 Stakeholder engagement

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) provides strategic advice to the Vice-Chancellor to assist the University meet its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In 2008, the Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office prepared Faculty profiles on Māori student participation, Māori staff, Māori-related research activity, recent Māori-related publications, and engagement with Māori stakeholders. The profiles are intended to inform policies and initiatives.

The University maintains and develops relationships with Māori communities. The panel was informed that steps have been taken in recent years to improve the advice to senior management from Māori iwi, while connections with Māori remain strong at lower levels throughout the University. In early 2009, a *Māori stakeholder engagement framework* was developed and was circulated for consultation. The framework aims to ensure that Māori participation at the University is developed in a manner that is informed by, and responds to, the needs of key Māori stakeholders. While supporting this initiative, the panel would like to see recognition of the fact that the Te Tiriti relations are an issue for all, not just for Māori and Māori communities of interest.

4.3   Māori students

The University is aware of the stable enrolment and retention statistics for Māori, and Senior Management is concerned that Māori enrolments have not been increasing. (See section 1.7 of this report.) Those responsible for equity believe that it is necessary to understand why this should be so and initial efforts are being put into analysing the causes so that appropriate equity action can be taken.

The panel was informed that Māori students who did enrol were becoming more successful as a consequence of effective support in the area of the students' first year experience. The panel believes there is also much to celebrate in progress being made in support services for Māori students and in student success and progression into postgraduate programmes.   Te Rōpu Āwhina and Manaaki Pihipihinga mentoring programmes have played significant roles in increasing achievement and levels of success (see section 2.5). It was also suggested to the panel that students should be supported to undertake the introductory foundation (Tohui) programme if they need support with academic skills development to ensure they are successful in their first year.

Another issue raised during interviews was the perception by some students of an over-emphasis on assisting students to change, and too little support for staff to understand the needs of Māori students and thereby bring about change at that level.

As can be noted from the opening of this section of the report, there is no Te Tiriti goal in the University's *Strategic plan*, although there is a statement of commitment. The panel is of the view that an appropriate goal should be included in the *Strategic plan* given that the messages contained in that plan are being well communicated to the University community through other insitutional and Faculty and School plans, and given the monitoring of actions through reporting procedures. As well, the importance placed on Māori student enrolment and retention by the University will be more apparent.

Recommendation

R 6   **The panel recommends that the University includes a goal regarding Māori student retention and achievement in the *Strategic plan* and associated actions and targets in the relevant operational plans which would bring the issue to the attention of the University community and which would support and direct the responses of Faculties and Schools to this issue.**

4.4   Māori staff

Toihuarewa, of some 10 years' standing, is convened by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori). It is a University-wide forum of Māori academics, non-Māori academics undertaking research or teaching courses with significant Māori content, relevant Associate Deans, two external representatives of Maori, and two Māori student representatives.   Toihuarewa facilitates the coming together of Māori from across faculties. The main focus of Toihuarewa is on the promotion of Māori learning, Māori teaching and Māori research, and it provides a Māori perspective and a Māori voice on academic issues including the examination of new programme and course proposals to check for relevant content where appropriate.

Toihuarewa, as a formally organised group, may well be unique in New Zealand universities, with representatives from University units that have responsibilities for issues such as student recruitment, student support and staff development. Toihuarewa is also aware of Māori research

on learning, teaching and retention and is contributing its own work on these issues. The panel was told that Māori feel comfortable within Toihuarewa and it heard of evidence of the positive impact of Toihuarewa in supporting Māori staff to be better teachers. Toihuarewa believed that in recent years, Māori success had become valued and that success was now expected.

The panel was also informed that Toihuarewa supports Māori students in their learning, especially in the first year experience and more particularly in the first six weeks of that first year, and that a University Māori and Pacific Equity Taskforce had this item on its agenda (see section 1.7 of this report). The panel was interested to hear that Nga Tauira Māori (Māori students association) was intending to engage further with Toihuarewa to improve Māori recruitment, retention and achievement, an interest that had not yet been followed up by Toihuarewa. The panel considers that joint action on student achievement would be a useful initiative given its importance to both Toihuarewa and students.

The University is an active partner in the Māori Academic Network Across Universities in Aotearoa (Manu-Ao Academy) which is an inter-university Māori academy for academic and professional advancement intended to support a culture of Māori scholarship within participating institutions. Funding from Manu-Ao has been used to support a range of initiatives for Māori staff within the University.

The University recognises that, while there are a number of initiatives to support Māori academic staff, the support offered to Māori general staff is less developed. The panel, therefore, supports the University's intention (enhancement initiative 401) to ***review and enhance the support provided for Māori general staff***.

4.5   Māori research

The University conducts research reviews of schools, units or programmes, and the inclusion of Māori research was guided by the 2008 *Research strategy for Māori @ Victoria*. This document acknowledges weaknesses in Māori research. One of the immediate targets is the recruitment of top Māori research leaders, but this could be difficult and needs to be considered in relation to internal capacity building processes and incentives and the development of Maori research leaders, which is another of the targets. Other targets include the recruitment of Māori postgraduate students; and generating excellence in Māori research throughout the University rather than only in Te Kawa a Māui (School of Māori Studies). An annual Toihuarewa research symposium (first held in 2008) is designed to showcase Māori-related research by Māori or about Māori across all disciplines. The University is encouraged to 'grow' its own researchers associated with the increase in internal capacity so that there is less need to recruit Māori research leaders from outside of the University.

5

University staff

5.1   Goal and commitment

The University's goal for staff, management and administration of the University is as follows.

Retain, develop and recruit high quality people who contribute to the University's success through outstanding leadership, scholarship and administration, through positive external engagements, and through quality governance and management.   [SP 5]

The University is committed to:

- *build academic and general staff capability in areas linked to strategic priorities,*

- *develop and implement recruitment strategies to attract and retain students of high ability,*

- *nurture early career academics and general staff to develop their capacity to be high performers,*

- *develop governance and management capability as a means of identifying, evaluating and responding to opportunities and risks to the University's development.*

5.2   Workload allocation

At present, all Schools are required to have workload policies and the University recognises that this devolution of responsibility raises questions of ensuring equity across the University. As in other New Zealand universities, Māori and Pacific staff carry responsibilities for pastoral care of students outside of their discipline areas, and carry responsibilities to their communities outside of campus, and it is not always possible to factor this in to workload models. Nevertheless, pastoral care of staff necessitates the University to be aware of workload issues. The University has reported to the panel that, from the start, the development of the system has been specifically driven by the need for consistency and equity, but there is still work on getting the system accepted and fully operational. Thus the University has enhancement initiative (502) – *complete the development of the workload assessment system so that the stakeholders are reasonably satisfied with its usefulness and functionality*.

5.3   Professional development

The responsibility for the professional development of academic and general staff is with the Pro Vice-Chancellors and Heads of Schools, and it is expected that they will budget for staff development.

The recent Human Resources Staff Development Policy brings together activities that had been happening across three main agencies – the University Teaching Development Centre (primarily for academic staff), Human Resources (primarily for General staff) and the Centre for Continuing Education and Executive Development. The three agencies are well-connected, and

the policy has facilitated collaboration among the agencies to improve the service to staff. The policy provides a coherent framework within which each makes its distinctive contribution.

The primary agency for academic staff development is the University Teaching Development Centre (UTDC) which runs academic development courses, workshops and seminars, and conducts sessions for individuals or groups to address specific needs. There is also a biennial one-day learning and teaching conference. The Centre has responsibility for supporting staff in the pedagogical usage of Blackboard. There is a voluntary orientation programme for all new academic staff and tutors (which is presented in collaboration with Human Resources) which facilitates the connection with the Centre immediately. This is supplemented by School-based induction programmes (which are compulsory) and managers and Heads of Schools have a checklist for assisting and supporting their new staff.

The University Teaching Development Centre administrates and contributes to the teaching of the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Learning and Teaching. It is intended that the opportunity to acquire a qualification will be an incentive to take up professional development. Deans reported that although only a small number of staff have completed the Certificate as at 2009, they were already being recognised as catalysts for change. Deans reported to the panel that there is a need for improved research supervision training, especially in the light of the University's desire for more postgraduate research students.

The self-assessment Portfolio suggests that the removal of a probation period for new academic staff may have contributed to the decline in attendance by staff at University Teaching Development Centre workshops. It is also recognised that much of the academic culture has centred around improving the Performance-Based Research Fund score, with not the same level of insistence on improving the quality of teaching. Even so, career high achievers want to improve and to do better in their teaching, and therefore seek assistance in both areas. The panel was informed that the Centre is reviewing the relevance and effectiveness of workshops as a consequence of falling participation, and considering opportunities to meet more directly the needs of Schools and individual staff.

The panel was informed that the University Teaching Development Centre is valued, is doing a good job, has become more mainstreamed in recent years, and is recognised by the University community for what it does. The impact of the Centre is limited by the number of staff, and Centre staff reported that they have reached saturation point. This makes it impracticable to do as much as they would wish, and leads to the prioritising of requests, and to the need to think about other ways of doing things, such as more direct work with individuals and individual disciplines at Faculty level. The Centre staff recognise that they do not have enough traction in Faculties at present and they would like to have the resources to improve the liaison with Faculties in order to provide more assistance for individuals and disciplines.

During interviews, the panel was made aware that staff need more support in developing an awareness of the diverse cultural needs of students, in particular a sensitivity to the cultural expectations of Māori, Pacific and international students from non-western societies. There was a perception among several student groups that the issue was too often regarded as an issue of student inadequacy or limitation, rather than also being seen as an issue for staff who require a greater understanding of cultural differences. The panel understands that University Teaching Development Centre provides professional development in this area to assist staff in working and interacting with such students.

5.4   Staff appraisal

The Professional Development and Career Planning scheme requires an annual assessment of staff progress and aims to assist staff in planning their professional future, providing advice and support. The scheme requires staff to commit to the process and Heads of Schools to engage with staff. For both, it is time consuming, but Deans reported that staff are now taking it more seriously and Schools are acknowledging that the work involved has been worthwhile. Staff involved also considered the scheme to be useful and reported that discussions identified needs and reasons for staff to achieve their goals. Experience in the scheme was leading staff to be more selective in what they discussed and therefore their needs were being better targeted. The panel was interested that some more senior staff considered the scheme best suited to new staff.

5.5   Leadership

The Leading People programme is the professional development programme available to managers, with workshops and coaching groups. The University recognises that new and emerging leaders need to be matched to the roles in the University requiring leadership, and therefore the leadership training is targeted at future leaders – Heads of School, chairs of committees and working parties, programme and section leaders. The University also wishes to increase the number of women in senior leadership roles, and hopes more women will be able to put themselves forward for consideration as a consequence of the University providing support and opportunities for training.

The panel supports this development and the University's enhancement initiative (501) which aims to maintain a database of such people for future reference in selecting people for leadership positions.

Affirmation

A 2   The panel affirms the University's intention (University enhancement initiative 501) to maintain a database of those who have completed leadership programmes with a view to drawing on their motivation and skill in filling a range of leadership roles in the University as they emerge.

6

Institutional quality assurance

6.1   Quality assurance framework

In the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit self-assessment Portfolio, section 1.5 'Quality assurance', the University recognised that there was a number of areas where improvements were necessary, including insufficient emphasis on systematic checking of processes and outcomes; variability in the consistency and effectiveness of quality assurance processes throughout the University and over time; an unclear balance between autonomy and accountability; tentativeness in relation to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of University-wide plans; and a lack of sharing information about good practice. The 2005 panel noted that the lack of a person or office whose commitment was first and foremost to a quality agenda and who had the authority to identify and initiate work on quality assurance and quality enhancement initiatives may well have been the reason why the University had been unable to address satisfactorily the entire range of general areas for improvement identified in the 2000 Cycle 2 academic audit report.

At the time, the University was intending to rethink its strategic emphasis and the quality assurance and audit functions of the Office of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), and in order to support that, the 2005 Cycle 3 report recommended (R3):

> *that the University reviews the effectiveness of existing quality assurance and quality enhancement mechanisms throughout the University; determines an appropriate institution-wide infrastructure and leadership for quality assurance and quality enhancement activities; and enhances those mechanisms that support a quality culture.*

The 2009 Cycle 4 self-assessment Portfolio acknowledged that the resolution of the issues raised by this recommendation is still underway, and it reported that quality assurance of learning outcomes is largely the business of Faculties. The University relies on processes of internal and external audit and review to monitor the quality of the academic programmes, the student experience, research performance and administrative functions. The processes that constitute an overall system of quality assurance are partly devolved but with central monitoring of the overall University goals. However, given the present level of Faculty autonomy, there is little or no cross-Faculty comparison of standards, although the panel recognised that the *Pathways to success* initiative has provided an institutional framework in the area of curriculum.

Academic programme reviews have an explicit focus on the quality of the design and implementation of programmes, evaluating the engagement of staff in learning and teaching, the integration of research into learning and teaching, and the links to relevant academic, social and professional communities. Present terms of reference for reviews articulate more clearly the aspects of the curriculum that should be attended to. The Deans of Faculties and the Pro Vice-Chancellors are responsible for ensuring the recommendations are implemented within a reasonable timeframe, and the panel was aware of concerns that accountability could be more transparent for the institution.

Internal audits provide an opportunity for managers of administrative units to have current practice reviewed and benchmarked against good practice. The audits are run by

PricewaterhouseCoopers and overseen by the Audit and Risk Committee of Council, and a register keeps track of all recommendations arising from the reviews that are still pending.

Accreditation of professional degrees in areas such as commerce, teaching, law, architecture, nursing, midwifery, accountancy and engineering offer valuable opportunities for national and international benchmarking, but they are (rightly) focussed on ensuring adequate preparation of graduates for entry into the profession, either with or without further postgraduate study and assessment. Professional accreditations touch only some discipline areas of a comprehensive university and do not therefore provide the University with the quality assurance data and the enhancement initiatives that cover all aspects of a University's values and mission.

Thus, there is a range of review procedures in place – academic programme reviews, internal audits, accreditation of professional degrees, as well as research performance reviews (see section 3.2). The University should ensure that they are integrated and co-ordinated to avoid overlap and gaps in scope.

The University recognises it needs better data and analysis so that the University can offer more targeted support when necessary. To assist the University to understand better the quality of its operations, the Portfolio reports that the University is intending to develop a small number of key performance indicators with quantitative measures supplemented with a narrative about qualitative investigations of processes, and has an enhancement initiative (601) *to develop an integrated set of indicators that will be used for monitoring, comparison where appropriate, and prompting of more detailed analysis where required.* The panel supports this initiative.

The Portfolio further identifies that the quality assurance of learning and teaching lies with Deans and the Heads of Schools; while quality management from the centre focuses on the dissemination of policy, approval of proposals and regulation of monitoring and reviews. The Portfolio acknowledges that 'quality assurance is the means of confirming that teaching and administrative units are engaged in a process of continuous improvement with productive outcomes', and that it is important 'to ensure that quality enhancement is a key element of leadership throughout the University, from senior management to course co-ordinators and administrators'. To assist in this, there is an enhancement initiative (602) to *review for consistency and clarity the role descriptions of Pro Vice-Chancellors, Heads of School, programme directors, Central Service Unit directors and faculty managers in ensuring continuous quality improvement at all levels.* While supporting this initiative, the panel notes that role descriptions will not, of themselves, ensure continuous improvement, and that it is unclear to the panel as to how these key personnel are to be supported by appropriate procedures and activities that will assure the institution as a whole that continuous improvement is being achieved to satisfactory institutional standards.

The panel spent some time during the site visit considering the issue of the quality assurance framework. The panel recognises that the University is aware of variability of practice and student experience arising from the devolution of responsibility as practised at the University. The panel also appreciates the University's desire to develop an institutional assurance of quality without creating a central compliance-oriented unit. The University has a clear desire to encourage academic ownership of quality by focusing on the quality of the activities for which all members of the University community are responsible, and does not want so see that desire harmed by the imposition by senior management of an institutional quality assurance framework that might be insensitive to the variety of cultures across the institution.

Nevertheless, the panel came to the view that whilst quality assurance functions may be carried out currently in various areas by committees and people with managerial and administrative responsibilities, a more coherent and transparent quality assurance framework at institutional level is required that identifies and rationalises quality assurance responsibilities and activities. This would bring together quality assurance activities and would assist the University in its desire for a greater consistency and coherence across the institution's academic programmes. This would assist the Senior Management:

- to know what is happening throughout the University and be able to assure itself of the quality of research, teaching, learning and community service and where support may be required to enhance quality, and

- to assure itself of the extent to which the core activities of the University are in line with its strategic direction as expressed in the University's *Strategic plan*.

In essence, the panel reaffirms and updates recommendation 3 in the 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit report.

Recommendation

R 7 **The panel recommends that the University continues to develop and implement an appropriate institution-wide quality assurance infrastructure and institutional leadership for quality assurance and quality enhancement activities that:**

- **builds on and enhances those existing mechanisms and procedures that are effective in supporting a quality culture,**

- **facilitates ownership of, and engagement with, quality and continuous improvement activities by the whole University community, and**

- **provides assurance of institution-wide quality in research, teaching, learning and community engagement.**

6.2   Student evaluations

The University conducts student evaluations of teachers and of courses, administered by the University Teaching Development Centre. The results of teacher evaluations are confidential to the staff members although summaries are often shared with Heads of Schools. Course evaluations are required to be part of the promotions applications and are discussed in the annual Performance Development and Career Planning exercise.

The 2005 Cycle 3 academic audit report noted that there were no formal or informal mechanisms that required academics, Schools or Faculties to share the outcomes of course or teaching evaluations with students, and R19 recommended the development of ways of ensuring timely feedback on the outcomes. From interviews at this site visit, the panel learned that follow-up on information provided by evaluations, and feedback to students were left to the individual staff member; and that feedback to students is happening but is uneven. The self-assessment Portfolio reports that a policy on student feedback is in preparation.

The University participates in the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) and has collected data on student perceptions of academic engagement in and out of class. It provides evidence about what students are actually doing, highlights the most critical aspects of learning and development, provides a 'learner-centred, whole-of-institution' perspective, and gives an index of students' involvement in study. Universities in Australia and New Zealand are

surveyed in the AUSSE exercise. The University has a working party which is exploring ways of using the data and considering ways the data might raise awareness about student engagement in their learning. The University Teaching Development Unit uses AUSSE data in its workshops. The University is encouraged to make greater use of this information.

7

Community engagement

7.1   Goal and commitment

The University's goal community engagement is as follows.

Communicate and apply scholarly expertise to enrich culture and society, and to contribute to an understanding and resolution of challenges facing local, national and international communities.   [SP7]

The University is committed to:

- ▪ *appoint, support, and recognise staff who enrich society and culture and apply their scholarly expertise to challenges and problems facing local, national and international communities,*

- ▪ *encourage staff to further the University's role as a critic and conscience of society.*

7.2   Engagement with the community

Connections with the city have grown over recent years, and the panel was informed by stakeholders that much of the credit for that improvement must go to the Vice-Chancellor and his team. Linkages with government agencies and contributions to public debates come not only because the University is sited in the capital city, but also because of linkages that are being developed with Crown Research Institutes in the Wellington area which have coincided with the upsurge in science at the University. Public lectures, inaugural lectures, performances in theatre, film and music all raise the profile and engage with the wider public. The University's responsibility to the community is also being realised through research projects arising from the University's environmental policy.

The general impression given to the panel was that generally the University is now engaged with the region and looking to see how it can contribute to it, although this redirection for the University was not yet demonstrated at all levels of the organisation.

A recent initiative of the University's Communication team is to work with Schools and research units to encourage them to develop communication plans to take advantage of opportunities for community engagement. The University sees a need to capture that effort as one strategy of social engagement that encompasses teaching, research and environmental responsibility. To this end, the University has an enhancement initiative (801) to **develop a plan for the achievement of its public contribution strategic goal, linking current initiatives to specific objectives and identifying new initiatives and procedures**.

7.3   Value of graduates

The panel was told of examples of the acceptability of graduates both nationally and internationally. In discussion with stakeholders, there was agreement that the quality of graduates was generally acceptable, and to some employers, honours graduates became very

good employees. Relevance of the content of qualifications was important for employers, and there was acceptance that the University was showing a real will to 'get it right' although some sectors of employment wished for a graduate programme which is more up-to-date and relevant in a fast developing digital environment. The Career Development and Employment section within Student Services offers a range of services to students that have a particular role in linking the University's graduates with employers and academic staff, often using alumni as speakers.

8

External academic collaborations and partnerships

8.1   Goal and commitments

The University's goal for external academic collaborations and partnerships is as follows.

Engage students as active and lifelong members of an inclusive and supportive community of higher learning through an outstanding academic, social and cultural experience that equips them to make a significant contribution to local, national, and international communities.

The University is committed to:

- ▪ *identify, develop and invest in relationships that support the University's strategic goals and maximise the benefits of being located in the capital city of New Zealand,*

- ▪ *engage with the wider community in creating and applying knowledge that has societal impact,*

- ▪ *appoint, support and recognise staff who successfully combine scholarship with a commitment to external engagement.*

8.2   Educational collaborations

The University's academic programmes in some areas benefit from the University's situation in the capital city. Not surprisingly, the academic programmes within the School of Government build on the University's capital city connection.

Within the Wellington area, the University offers a *Victoria Police Education Programme* which provides New Zealand Police staff with opportunities to complete individual courses, programmes of academic study and gain qualifications. There is a Victoria Police Education Programme Board of Studies, and the University's normal quality assurance procedures are applied to this programme.

On another level is the collaboration with Massey University which has given rise to the *New Zealand School of Music*. The academic programmes are delivered from each university; staff who contribute to the delivery of academic programmes in the School are employed by the universities in which they teach; and students are enrolled by Victoria University of Wellington through a Service Level Agreement with the School. At present, only the Director of the School and administrative staff are employed by the School. It is proposed to build a separate purpose-built facility in central Wellington to house the School, and to bring staff and students from both institutions into one teaching, learning and performance space. There is interest in this kind of inter-university collaboration, and in the details of processes and quality assurance surrounding the development of the academic community and the development and delivery of academic programmes in such a venture.

The Unit has been asked by the University and by Massey University not to audit the School of Music as part of an academic audit of either university alone. The Graduating Year Review of academic programmes, to be conducted by the School and reported to the Committee on University Academic Programmes of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors Committee, is timetabled to take place in 2011. Therefore it has been proposed that the School will be subject to an independent academic audit by the Unit in 2013.

8.3   Internationalisation

The international strategy of the University has as its aim 'the pursuit of a global perspective in our learning, teaching, research and services'. As with other New Zealand universities, the highest profile is given to international students on campus, and increasing full fee-paying international students is identified as a priority for the internationalisation agenda. As well, there are student exchange agreements with other institutions by which there are to be an exchange of students to study for courses for credit to their home institutions. The University has reported that there are more incoming students on these programmes than outgoing students, and therefore the University enhancement initiative 901 will e*xplore further the tactics that might be used to encourage Victoria University of Wellington students to increase their take-up of study abroad opportunities.*

More broadly, the panel was informed that those responsible for internationalisation have been working with various parts of the University to develop and implement the internationalisation strategy. Victoria International has the role of supporting the University's strategic direction by ensuring through close collaboration with Faculties and Central Service Units that internationalisation, in its broader context, is an integral part of teaching and learning, research and staff and student experiences. In addition, it aims to provide high quality international marketing, recruitment and support services for international students.

In a detailed plan, covering the period 2009-2011, Victoria International noted a wide range of actions that would be undertaken with clearly defined inputs, outputs, measures of success, and responsibilities. The plan was structured under the framework of 'Strategic internationalisation', 'Internationalisation of teaching and learning', 'International marketing, recruitment and revenue', 'Internationalisation of students and alumni', 'Internationalisation of staff', 'Internationalisation of research', 'International development, service and equity', 'Māori, Pacific and Pakeha experience in international context', 'International policies, administration and quality assurance', and 'Regional and country strategies'. Ambitious in scope and scale, the plan suggested to the panel that this was another area in which the University was seeking to make a more institutionally managed approach to part of its core strategic business.

8.4   Offshore delivery

There are two significant international teaching agreements.

One agreement is an offshore teaching relationship with the *Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics* in Vietnam, through which space is leased in Ho Chi Minh City to teach the first year-and-a-half of a Victoria University of Wellington Bachelor of Commerce and Administration degree. The final one-and-a-half years of the degree are completed in Wellington. Local lecturers at the Ho Chi Minh City University are employed to teach the courses (in English), and local tutors, some of whom are graduates of the Victoria University of Wellington, are also employed.

The other agreement covers participation as one of five universities in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia who have arrangements with the *Malaysian Government* around the Malaysian Bachelor of Education (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). The first and fourth years of the programme are taught by an Institute of Education in Kuala Lumpur; the second and third years are taught in Wellington.

The panel had discussions with those with responsibilities for the successful implementation of these agreements. Under the former agreement, the University supports the teaching extensively, supplies materials and monitors quality of the delivery in Vietnam including teachers from Wellington in Vietnam and the setting of major assessment which is assessed in Vietnam and checked and moderated in Wellington. The University has recently reviewed and strengthened the arrangements by which it manages the partnership. Tracking of students showed that they do well when they come to Wellington. Under the latter agreement, all five contributing universities approve course outlines and moderate courses and provide staff training, and the collaboration among six institutions has a benchmarking effect on content, teaching, assessment and standards.

The panel came to the view that the University understood and practised appropriate quality assurance arrangements, and that care was taken to ensure the programme did not outstrip the University's ability to assure quality.

Acknowledgements

The panel thanks in particular Professor Pat Walsh (Vice-Chancellor), Professor Penny Boumelha (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)), Associate Professor David Crabbe (Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic)) and Dr Willemijn Vermaat (Academic Quality Officer) for their support of the audit process and for the University's warm welcome. The panel thanks all those who contributed to the University's self-assessment process, the compilation of the self-assessment Portfolio, and the organisation associated with the site visit. The panel is most grateful for the openness and frankness of those who gave of their time to appear before the panel and for their constructive comments and observations.

Audit Panel

Chair of the Panel

Professor Robert Allen
Auckland University of Technology

New Zealand academic members of the Panel

Professor Carolyn Burns CBE
University of Otago

Professor Russell Bishop, *Tainui, Ngati Awa*
University of Waikato

New Zealand non-academic members of the Panel

Graeme McNally
Consultant, Christchurch

Overseas member of the Panel

Emeritus Professor Barbara van Ernst AM
Consultant, Melbourne, Australia

In attendance:

John M. Jennings
Director, New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit

Appendix 1

Victoria University of Wellington enhancements

Notes

- This listing of the University's key improvements, as identified in the University's Portfolio associated with this academic audit, is ordered according to the Unit's indicative framework for Cycle 4 audit.

- The numbering of the sections in this listing is the number of the sections of this report.

- The numbering of the improvements is as used in the Portfolio.

General

Strategic plan

Enhancement initiative 701

Develop further an integrated set of institutional data to inform decision-making to achieve the goals of the University Strategic plan*, and at the same time provide data for performance indicators for external reporting.*

Equity

Enhancement initiative 301

Co-ordinate current endeavours to improve Māori and Pacific student retention consistent with the Māori Student Retention and Achievement Framework and the Equity Strategy.

Learning and teaching

Learning environment

Enhancement initiative 702

Provide academic staff and students with access to progress information and course planning facilities online.

Enhancement initiative 703

Establish a system to manage efficiently and consistently the production of information for students and staff about courses and enrolment

Enhancement initiative 102

Develop and adopt a set of defined responsibilities in teaching at University, faculty, school and programme level, that are aligned with the University statement of quality in teaching; integrate existing policies and processes with reference to the statement of quality in teaching.

Enhancement initiative 101

In consultation with academic staff, foster reflection on teaching and innovative practice by reviewing promotions guidelines and by establishing a systematic process for responding to student feedback.

Learner support

Enhancement initiative 302

Establish formal links between the various units responsible for the student experience, including teaching and learning, and develop a common plan where appropriate.

Research environment

Research quality and performance

Enhancement initiative 201

Review policies and processes to support individual research performance, taking account of the recommendations of the research reviews

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Māori staff

Enhancement initiative 401

Review and enhance the support provided for Māori general staff.

University staff

Workload allocation

Enhancement initiative 502

Complete the development of the workload assessment system so that the stakeholders are reasonably satisfied with its usefulness and functionality.

Leadership

Enhancement initiative 501

Maintain a database of those who have completed leadership programmes with a view to drawing on their motivation and skill in filling a range of leadership roles in the University as they emerge.

Institutional quality assurance

Quality assurance framework

Enhancement initiative 601

Develop an integrated set of indicators that will be used for monitoring, comparison where appropriate, and prompting of more detailed analysis where required.

Enhancement initiative 602

Review for consistency and clarity the role descriptions of Pro Vice-Chancellors, Heads of Schools, programme directors, Central Service Unit directors and faculty managers in ensuring continuous quality improvement at all levels.

Community engagement

Engagement with the community

Enhancement initiative 801

The University will develop a plan for the achievement of its public contribution strategic goal, linking current initiatives to specific objectives and identifying new initiatives and procedures.

External academic collaborations and partnerships

Internationalislation

Enhancement initiative 901

Explore further the tactics that might be used to encourage Victoria University of Wellington students to increase their take-up of study abroad opportunities.

Appendix 2

New Zealand Universities Academic audit Unit Te Wāhanga Tātari

Terms of reference

The Unit's terms of reference are:

- to consider and review the universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the ongoing academic quality of academic programmes, their delivery and their learning outcomes, and the extent to which the universities are achieving their stated aims and objectives in these areas,

- to comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities are applied effectively,

- to comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities reflect good practice in maintaining quality,

- to identify and commend to universities national and international good practice in regard to academic quality assurance and quality enhancement,

- to assist the university sector to improve its educational quality,

- to advise the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee on quality assurance matters,

- to carry out such contract work as is compatible with its audit role.

The Unit acts as a fully independent body in the conduct of its audit activities.

Vision

- Quality New Zealand university education serving students' future.

Mission

To contribute to quality New Zealand university education by:

- engaging as leader and advocate in the development of quality cultures,

- applying quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that enable improvement in student engagement, experience and learning outcomes.

Objective with respect to academic audits conducted during the period 2008-2012

- Timely completion of academic audits producing audit reports acknowledged as authoritative, fair and perceptive, and of assistance to universities.

Appendix 3

Cycle 4 indicative framework

Update on the 'mid-term' report on Cycle 3 recommendations and university enhancement initiatives
Given the focus of Cycle 3 was teaching quality, programme delivery and the achievement of learning objectives, the university may wish to incorporate reports on recommendations and enhancement initiatives from Cycle 3 into relevant sections that follow.

	Topics	*Activities*
1	***General***	
2	***Teaching and learning***	2.1 The development, design, implementation and delivery of academic programmes and courses that:
		* develop intellectual independence,
		* are relevant to the needs of the disciplines,
		* are relevant to the needs of learners and other stakeholders.
		2.2 The learning environment and learning support for students, including learning support for students from targeted groups.
		2.3 Student achievement and success.
3	***Research environment***	3.1 Research students and research supervision.
		3.2 Teaching and learning within a research environment.
		3.3 The interdependence of research and teaching.
		3.4 The role of critic and conscience of society.
4	***Te Tiriti o Waitangi***	4.1 The application of the principles[8] of Te Tiriti to:
		* access to learning,
		* curriculum.
5	***Academic and support staff***	5.1 The determination of an appropriate academic staff profile across the institution.
		5.2 Recruitment, appointment and induction strategies.
		5.3 The implementation and monitoring of workload models.
		5.4 Professional support, development and appraisal of academic staff.
6	***Institutional quality assurance***	6.1 The internal planning-implementation-reporting-evaluation-enhancement cycle as applied to academic processes, academic programmes and courses.
7	***Management and administrative support***	7.1 The development of a management and administrative infrastructure that provides effective support to research-informed teaching and

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[8] A discussion of the implications for universities arising from the principles of Te Tiriti is found in John M Jennings (compiler), *New Zealand universities and Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, Wellington, New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, 2004, 'AAU Series on Quality' no.4.
Available at http://www.nzuaau.ac.nz/nzuaau_site/publications/asq/Te%20Tiriti%20o%20Waitangi.pdf

	Topics	*Activities*
		learning.
		7.2 The determination of an appropriate management and administrative staff profile.
		7.3 Professional support, development and appraisal of management and administrative staff.
8	*Community engagement*	8.1 The identification of stakeholders and communities of interest, the seeking of advice, and the application of information gained to curriculum and student learning.
9	*External academic collaborations and partnerships*	9.1 The development of external collaborative research and academic ventures and partnerships that impact on curriculum and student learning and achievement.

To each of these sections, the following questions are to be applied to each of the above topics

Commitments
> *What are the goals and objectives and the expected outputs and outcomes in this area and how were they determined?*

Strengths and progress
> *What are the key strengths in this area and what positive progress has been made in achieving the goals and objectives?*
> *What are the output/outcome data and other evidence used to determine strengths and to judge progress, and how relevant and effective are they?*

Challenges
> *What are the key challenges for the university in this area?*

Monitoring
> *What key quality mechanisms and processes are used to monitor ongoing quality and to provide input into continuous improvement in this area, and how effective are they?*

Enhancement
> *Arising from the self-assessment, what are the areas in which enhancement is needed?*
> *What enhancement activities will be undertaken during the next planning period – say, three years – who will be responsible, and what are the expected outputs and outcomes of those enhancement activities?*
> *How will the university monitor the effectiveness of changes arising from the enhancement activities?*