

Education Position Paper

Context and Current Performance

Environmental scans reveal a range of factors which bear on the University's educational mission. Most of these trends have been apparent for some time but they, and recently emerging developments, are likely to be felt more sharply in the coming decade. The key trends that will shape our future direction as a comprehensive, research-led Auckland-based university, arise from demographic, geo-political, economic and technological developments. They also reflect the changing attitudes of students, their families, employers and policymakers to the value of university-based learning in the worlds of work and economic and social enterprise, the rising interest in global sustainability and an increasingly conscious focus on the role of extra-disciplinary knowledge in addressing societal challenges.

A University of Auckland education will be personally transformative, professionally enabling and socially engaging. We will provide our students with a broad range of intellectually challenging experiences that are informed by international scholarship and anchored by a shared sense of belonging and identity based upon close engagement with mātauranga Māori and the knowledges and culture of the tangata whenua. It will also recognize the role played in the life of the University and the wider community by Pacific peoples and the diverse multi-cultural communities of the Auckland region. These curricular and extra-curricular experiences, will lay the foundations for our graduates to make significant and fulfilling contributions to the national and global workforce and to local and national communities. They will also prepare them to benefit from ongoing post-graduation studies that will enrich later stages of their personal, social and professional lives.

The University has been active in addressing the educational dimensions of emerging environmental trends over the past decade.

The student body

Focused efforts have been made to attract a diverse student body of the highest possible academic potential, including students from our equity target groups, and to provide excellent educational opportunities for them. There is, however, much more to be done. For example, the enrolment numbers of Māori and Pacific students have plateaued in recent years (7% and 8% respectively in 2019) and these students' pass and retention rates are still significantly below those of other ethnically-defined cohorts. Furthermore, survey evidence indicates that Māori students' experience of the University as a place in which to study and feel at home is mixed. This is also true of Pacific students. Although the University has committed considerable effort to addressing the needs of Māori and Pacific students it has not taken a systematic approach to identifying evidence-based approaches to supporting them. Significantly, increased levels of participation by students by Māori and Pacific communities have not been matched by appropriate shifts in the University's academic staffing profile and particularly not in its ranks of senior academics.

While the University has been very successful in recruiting high quality students into its doctoral and postgraduate taught programmes, it has relied heavily on international sources and on its own student body as prime grounds of recruitment. Despite significant efforts, it has not had a level of success in recruiting postgraduate students from elsewhere in New Zealand that would be expected from its resource-base, programme range and international reputation. The University's reliance on international graduates poses a risk to its student enrolment profile and presents it with the challenge of establishing itself as the major target of aspiring postgraduate students from outside of Auckland. There is particular scope for increasing its appeal to Māori and Pacific students who have qualifications from other New Zealand universities, and from universities in the Pacific region.

Graduate profile

Considerable work has been undertaken across faculties to implement the University's Graduate Profile approved by Senate in 2016. An embedded graduate profile has been developed for every University of Auckland undergraduate and postgraduate degree and other qualification. This means that our curricula now have a shared set of high level goals and aspirations (with an emphasis on

global citizenship, creativity and leadership) which are clearly articulated for students as they embark on their programmes of study.

Teaching capability

The University is known for its excellent teachers and does very well in national competitions (our teachers have won 35 national teaching awards since their introduction in 2001). There are, however, areas of uneven performance across the University. In 2017 the University developed a shared understanding of what constitutes excellent teaching and how this is to be achieved in our context. This is articulated in the new TeachWell@UOA teaching capability framework (released in 2018), the development of which was influenced by a review of benchmark universities and the Advance HE Professional Standards Framework (PSF). We will build on the enthusiasm and commitment of our teachers to develop a systematic approach to enhancing teaching capability for the benefit of students and the professional satisfaction of teachers.

Utilising learning technologies

Since 2016 the University has accelerated its capability in utilizing educational technologies, tools and systems to support flexible pathways and diverse educational experiences for our students. We have an evolved LMS environment and staff capability to deploy a range of course delivery methods within the context of our campus-based strategy. The recent establishment of the Learning Design Service means that the University now has the capability to support staff in exploring design options that utilize learning technologies. The University now needs to capitalize on these gains in the development of learning technologies and supporting resources to optimize educational opportunities for students.

Up to now, the University has not specified levels of deployment of these resources, beyond a basic requirement that all courses have a minimal Canvas presence. The development and effective utilisation of educational technology is a critical building block of teaching excellence and student engagement and will require careful attention to enhancing the confidence and capability of students and teachers.

Embedding employability and entrepreneurship

The University is already regarded as the premier institution in New Zealand for graduate employability and entrepreneurship. While neither 'employability' nor 'entrepreneurship' have ever been explicit features of our strategy, we have higher visibility of and commitment to the attributes we aspire for our graduates following the embedding of our Graduate Profile across curricula. These attributes include the ability to innovate and think creatively about real-world problems and issues. We also have some unique resources and activities in the area of student entrepreneurship and are positioned to make a significant contribution to enabling innovation and lifting productivity in NZ by developing graduates with entrepreneurial skills and mindsets. Nevertheless, effective and widely recognised responses to employability agendas remain a particular challenge for programmes which are not subject to professional accreditation.

Areas of Strategic Focus

Curricula, programmes and delivery

The University should be known for exciting, research-led programmes that are relevant to the grand challenges of our times, engage with the interests of the communities from which our students are drawn and recognize our distinctive identity and the role that Te Tiriti and mātauranga Māori play in framing it. While ensuring that the learning experience of our students is located in a distinctive sense of place, we will also ensure that the curriculum is informed by advanced trends in international higher education and scholarship and addresses the employability interests of our students and their communities. These imperatives will need to inform our approach to reviewing our curricula over the coming decade. In order to pursue the University's strategic educational objectives effectively it will also be necessary to reconsider the frameworks within which its teaching and learning is set. We will need to review our qualifications on an ongoing basis to ensure that they meet the evolving needs of a diverse student body, looking beyond conventional degree qualifications to other ways of organizing and recognizing university learning. We will also need to reconsider the way in which our qualifications are structured so as to ensure they are academically robust and allow for the most effective use of staffing and infrastructural resources. The need to utilize our resources more effectively may lead us to reconsider the way student load is distributed across courses. An enhanced

focus on sustainability, the future of work and employability and interdisciplinarity, and on meeting the needs of diverse communities will require changes to our curricula, while the opportunities opened up by a range of geographically flexible learning technologies will require ongoing attention to modes of delivery and to the staff and student support necessary to make them effective.

Challenge questions

- How do we identify, promote and support sustained, educationally beneficial innovation in our pedagogy, delivery, programme structures and student experience? How can our students be incorporated into the exploration of these innovations?
- How do we develop and deliver a range of curricular and co-curricular experiences that give our students the opportunity to enjoy a distinctively New Zealand education that is enriched by the University's ongoing global academic engagement?
- What criteria should we employ when considering developing new programmes and ceasing to offer others?
- What are the curricula and programmatic implications of preparing students to apply transdisciplinary knowledge to scientific, social and economic challenges?

The research-teaching nexus

Well-grounded curriculum development will need to be informed by the fruits of research-based disciplinary and interdisciplinary pedagogies developed by staff members across the University and their international peers and partners. The relationship between teaching and research is also manifest in research-informed teaching where the curriculum reflects the latest disciplinary thinking and knowledge and through research-led teaching where students' research processes and methodologies develop deep and current knowledge of their fields of study.

As a research intensive University, our research led/informed teaching experience is a key aspect of our distinctiveness, offering a value proposition that our students expect and deserve. A vibrant and dynamic teaching and research nexus is vital to bringing about the learning expected in higher education, including the development of key graduate attributes such as discipline-specific expertise, critical thinking and reasoning, and lifelong learning. Successful integration of research and teaching enhances the student experience, enriches institutional research culture and is critical to attracting and training the next generation of researchers.

Challenge question

- How can we broaden and strengthen the relationship between research and teaching in order to enhance the quality, depth and breadth of the student learning experience?

Māori communities

The new initiatives identified above should be advanced in ways that enhance the educational experience of students drawn from Māori communities. For example, curricula and extra-curricular developments which facilitate educational and culturally appropriate engagement with mātauranga Māori and te reo will endow the University with a distinctive sense of place in accord with the needs of our Māori students and create an authentic sense of belonging for them. At the same time, the University can build on its research networks in indigenous education and knowledges to provide expanded opportunities for Māori students to study abroad and identify evidence-based modes of support and delivery that will enhance their learning experience in the University. Measures such as these will assist Māori students to fulfil their potential in a university setting and should also enhance the reputation of the University in ways which will encourage members of Māori communities to see it as their tertiary institution of first choice. The University will then be able to leverage its reputation for meeting the needs of Māori students to encourage recruitment into its degree and foundation programmes and strengthen its pathway work with schools and communities. Our Tai Tonga and Tai Tokerau campuses can play key roles in these activities. It will also be necessary to identify more effective ways of encouraging highly performing Māori students to pursue doctoral studies and to provide career pathways into the academic workforce.

Challenge questions

- What changes to our curricula, delivery, staff profile, institutional culture and built environment will be necessary to make the University an attractive choice for Māori students from the region and to provide maximum educational benefit for them? How can these changes be brought about?

- How should our commitment to the nation's partnership with Māori be reflected in our engagement with Māori communities and students, our provision of pathways into and through the University and in the educational experiences we offer students from them?
- How do we leverage our partnership relationships with Māori under Te Tiriti and with Ngāti Whātua as tangata whenua to forge a distinctive University of Auckland culture for all our staff and students?

Pacific communities

Curriculum review initiatives will need to consider ways in which we can enhance the roles of Pacific ways of knowing and selected Pacific languages in the educational experience of our students. These initiatives should ensure that what we teach is relevant to the needs of Pacific communities (families, churches and schools) and should be accompanied by appropriate evidence-based support mechanisms. In these ways, we can make the University of Auckland a more attractive option for Pacific students. We will need to continue to enhance our approach to recruiting students from these communities through systematic engagement with key schools and other influencers, utilising the location and staff at Tai Tonga, and establishing and promoting pathways that will broaden the range of programme options available to them. We will also need to identify academic career development approaches that will correct significant shortcomings in our recruitment and retention of academics from Pacific communities.

Challenge questions

- What changes to our curricula, delivery, staff profile, institutional culture and built environment will be necessary to make the University an attractive choice for Pacific students from within New Zealand and to provide maximum educational benefit for them? How can these changes be brought about?
- How will we engage with Pacific communities (schools, churches and families) to understand their educational needs so as to provide effective pathways into and through the University?
- What would be required to establish the University of Auckland as a key element in a Pacific Islands' regional educational hub for recruitment, student mobility and institutional partnerships with governments and universities in the region?

Employability and work integrated learning

In order to address an increasingly prominent employability agenda we will need to embed WIL systematically across all our qualifications in ways that recognize it as a distinctive mode of learning. The University's Graduate Profile provides a strong framework for extending teaching strategies that support students to develop professional enabling capabilities and attributes. We should identify innovative ways of extending the reach of WIL by utilizing digital technologies to provide experiences that are scalable and not reliant on physical location. Reconsiderations of our programmes should include an exploration of options for industry-based postgraduate and doctoral programmes based on extended engagement with industry (broadly understood). These partnerships, and the contributions of practice-informed academic staff should enrich our curricula by providing an extended range of employment-related learning experiences for all undergraduate and postgraduate students, not only for those in professional programmes.

Challenge questions

- How can we ensure that the University's approach to employability is aligned with our role as a comprehensive, research-intensive tertiary institution operating in a global environment?
- What would it take for employability (including innovation and entrepreneurship) to be a recognized strength of all our programmes?
- What implications will an enhanced commitment to employability have for our curricula, modes of delivery, and how programmes and qualifications are structured?

Technology and the on-campus experience

We need to build on recent staff and student experience to take a systematic approach to developing modes of blended learning across all our UG and PGT courses. The goal here is to enhance the learning experience of our students and provide them with increased flexibility in engaging with their studies and with the University's educational and support resources. Auckland OnLine will enhance its off-campus delivery of degrees and micro-credentials aimed primarily at students with prior successful experience of university study whose work and other commitments preclude on-campus study. Some students may benefit from programmes which combine a reliance on remote learning with targeted

on-campus experiences. For most of our students, and particularly for those entering university directly from school, the focus will be on maximising the educational benefits of campus-based learning and student life, utilizing learning technologies where appropriate but also ensuring that campus development programmes respond to student demands for informal study and social spaces. We will need to ensure that our students gain maximum educational advantage from their on-campus experience as learners, as participants in University governance and as members of a vibrant and distinctive University of Auckland culture that reflects the diversity of our student body. The design of teaching and study spaces on campus should enhance our students' sense of positive identification with the University, making it a place where they can interact with students from across the University and with members of staff.

Challenge questions

- How do we maximise the educational value our students derive from on-campus curricular and extra-curricular experiences and face-to-face learning?
- How can we extend and integrate on-campus experiences with those available through digital media so as to enhance the educational opportunities of all our students?
- What approach to campus design and space utilization will be necessary to enhance significantly the curricular and extra-curricular experience of our students?