University of Auckland Learning & Teaching Plan 2017 – 19

Why a plan for learning & teaching?

With constant change in higher education and lifelong learning, universities explore and seek further ways to engage students in the campus-based learning experience. Some of our key successes over the past three years, many highlighted in this document, illustrate the importance of having some large goals but also the ability to share and grow ideas, reflect on practice and evolve the learning environment incrementally. The extensive projects completed in the previous plan (2013-2016) have caused us to think deeply about the future of learning and the changing needs and expectations of our students. Extensive working groups have reported and delivered on a wide range of issues to help influence strategic priorities and the future student experience.

As the world changes, the foundation remains clear: our research-informed, campus-based learning experiences provide our students with an engaging and challenging set of learning challenges. The new Graduate Profile (GP) will provide the opportunity for all programmes to articulate learning goals in the context of wider aspirations we have established for all students. The framework also allows us to reflect on the nature of our programmes and how new ways of working and teaching can help achieve learning outcomes in new and exciting ways.

There are some cornerstone ideas in this new plan:

- To empower teachers to build more coherence and relevance in our courses and programmes, providing students with clarity, context and an aspirational framework for their studies
- To develop further techniques and processes to improve administrative processes in teaching, while providing greater learning value to students
- To invest in reliable, teaching excellence across three delivery modes where appropriate: Face-to-face, blended and online.

Given our proud research tradition, what do we mean by research-informed teaching? The expression could be interpreted two ways: the teaching process being based on pedagogical research and best practice, and; teaching where course content and assessment is enlightened by the research of the discipline and the researcher(s) involved in teaching the course. Our teaching can and should incorporate both these ideas.

The University Learning & Teaching Plan outlines priorities for developing the educational environment for students and teachers. It is built upon key statements in the University Strategic Plan (2013-2020), University of Auckland Charter and the University Graduate Profile which inform the direction of the University. The Learning and Teaching Plan is supported by the long-term academic plans of faculties, the strategies of service
divisions, including the Equity Office, ITS, the Office of the PVC (Māori), CLeaR, the School of Graduate Studies and Libraries and Learning Services.

The new plan is organised around four themes related to supporting our: Design, Delivery, Preparation and Support, and Leadership.

Our context:

- We are New Zealand’s largest and foremost higher educational institution which includes an urban campus in the heart of Auckland

- Our student body is increasingly diverse, signalled by increasing proportions of international students and students from Māori and Pacific Island communities and migrant groups which are now demographically significant in the Auckland area.

- We are a comprehensive university delivering diverse subjects across eight Faculties. In 2016, 31 University of Auckland subjects (73% of its subjects) were ranked first in New Zealand by the QS World University Rankings.

- Entry to University of Auckland programmes is competitive; our undergraduate entry standards for all of our programmes are significantly above minimum University Entrance (UE) requirements.

- The University attracts the highest share of school leavers of any New Zealand university. Our school leaver intake includes a growing number of high academic performers. (In 2016 over half of the University’s school leaver intake had a GPE of 5 or greater, compared to a third in 2010.) At the same time we admit a significant number of students via non-traditional pathways as an expression of our commitment to equal educational opportunity.

- The University has the largest share of A-rated researchers in New Zealand and our students benefit from an intellectually rich, research-informed learning environment.

Challenges in our environment

- Auckland is a fast-growing city which is struggling to provide sufficient housing and public transport options. The cost of living is high by any standard and many students blend a lifestyle of work and study. Demand for flexible learning structures and “student-friendly” solutions is increasing.

- The changing expectations of some employers and the implications for students in terms of achieving attributes and outcomes during their years of study.

- Global competition for talented students.
• Developing and sustaining a business and delivery model which meets the needs of students and delivers the outcomes we desire for them.

Our learning environment

We are committed to delivering a learning environment that is characterized by:

• Academically and socially responsive curricula that incorporate national and international developments in fields of academic study and embed learning experiences that provide students with the opportunity to acquire the ways of thinking and working needed in rapidly evolving future work environments and in the communities of which they are a part.

• Enquiry-based, independent learning for undergraduate and graduate students in a world-class research-informed environment.

• A focus on campus-based education for undergraduates and postgraduates with growing provision for learning for a range of post-work experience programmes in professional and business-related disciplines.

• A commitment to enhancing levels of successful participation by Māori and Pacific students and by students entering our programmes under our equity provisions via non-traditional pathways.

• Evidence-based enhancement of the student experience, utilising student experience and engagement surveys, course and lecturer surveys, learning analytics, research on learning in higher education settings.

• Strengthened postgraduate pathways that encourage more students into masters and doctoral level study across all disciplines who will go on to play a key role in enterprises and organisations.

Celebrating achievements in 2013 – 2016

Through the hard work of our learning and teaching community, working parties, TLQC and Faculties, we have made good progress against the priorities set out in the Learning and Teaching Plan 2013-2016. Some of the highlights of this period are below.

1. Preparing students for an increasing global and competitive world

A major milestone in this period was the renewal of our University Graduate Profile (GP), last updated in 2003. This provides a framework for curriculum development utilising a common set of desired outcomes. The structure of our new profile enables us to express our aspirations for all University of Auckland graduates and how each programme contextualises and aligns with those goals. Our next important step is to
embed and implement the profile -- a significant piece of work that will be a priority for the next Learning and Teaching Plan cycle.

In recognition of the importance of real-world student engagement to high impact learning, the University endorsed the CDES strategy: *Enhancing Student Employability through Employer Engagement Strategy 2015 - 2017* to support faculties to embed more experiential learning opportunities within our courses and programmes. Implementing this strategy in the years to come will support us to provide more integrative experiences for students.

Libraries and Learning Services developed scalable learning resources to support the development of essential student skills, including an Academic Integrity course and are now developing resources to support Stage One students understand the principles of academic writing.

2. **Strengthening undergraduate and postgraduate degree pathways**

Since 2013, we have been exploring how our degrees can be structured to maximize the recruitment benefits of high quality teaching and research staff and a comprehensive range of programmes. As part of this, we have reviewed the relationship between honours and master’s degree within our degree framework and modelled options for enabling widespread adoption of 180-point masters for both professional and academic disciplines. Faculties have developed long-term academic plans for streamlining their course offerings and strengthening pathways within programmes to optimize access and interdisciplinary opportunities for students.

3. **Develop our capacity in blended learning to enhance student access, engagement and retention**

In Semester 1, 2016, following a multi-year e-learning review project, we transitioned to new systems for learning management (Canvas) and reading lists (TALIS). We now have an integrated, seamless virtual learning environment for students and teachers and many more tools to support teaching, learning, assessment and course management. Optimizing our use of the advanced capability available in Canvas to enhance student learning is an objective for the next period.

Since 2015 we have delivered our first three Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in partnership with FutureLearn and as a result gained valuable experience in a new flexible delivery mode. Through our Media Productions Unit we increased our capability to deliver quality instructional videos. We drew on this experience to offer one of our largest residential courses (Critical Thinking) in both an online and face-to-face format.

Other area of on-going growth and development was lecture recording (800+ courses per annum) and the technology review of our teaching environments.

4. **Promoting teaching & learning development**
We continued to build a strong University-wide teaching and learning culture. Our teaching commitment and expertise were also strengthened by the growth of the Professional Teaching Fellow community across the University (400+), and by our CLeaR fellows who promoted inter-disciplinary conversations around ‘rethinking the classroom’ (2014), ‘student engagement and achievement (2015) and ‘engaging with eLearning’ (2016). Our Learning Enhancement Grant recipients explored other emerging areas of pedagogical interest including best practices for using social media in teaching and learning, and for supporting students to create multi-media content in assessment. Library and Learning Services implemented a new integrated service delivery model to support the development scaleable, sustainable and strategic learning resources for inclusion in the curriculum.

5. Continually increasing the quality of our programmes & courses

In 2014 a reference group surveyed how student information is tracked across the University for the purpose of improving student outcomes and recommended that the University explore ways in which student data in Canvas and other institutional systems (DSS, CS9) can be used to identify students’ learning needs in real time and design timely interventions. A Reporting and Learning Analytics Group was established in 2016 to scope this growing field of research and practice and build a set of business requirements for learning analytics.

A significant achievement in this period was the development of a Learning and Teaching Continuity Guide to support teachers in preparing resilient courses and managing unexpected campus disruptions. This guide was formally adopted in 2016 and embedding these principles in practice is a priority for the coming period.

In supporting the consistency of courses in Canvas, we encourage disciplinary areas to develop guidelines and standards for the web-based aspects of all courses for critical learning resources. We will continue to improve consistency of the student e-learning experience.

Finally, in 2016 we transitioned from the previous, Cecil-based, largely paper system, to a new centralised, online system for course and teaching evaluations (SET). SET enhances our ability to capture and report on student feedback in order to continually improve our courses.

Priorities for Learning & Teaching Plan 2017 – 2019

In the last planning cycle, the Academic Quality Agency (AQA) commended many of the University’s teaching and learning processes, including our student feedback systems for capturing and sharing the student voice at all organizational levels, and our access and transition arrangements for Māori and Pacific learners which reflect our special relationship with Māori and commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. The Audit validated the long-term initiatives identified in our first Learning and Teaching Plan and we move
into the next three years with a strong sense of direction, shaped and supported by our new University Graduate Profile and long-term faculty academic plans. Our high level priorities for 2017-19 are below.

**Theme 1: DESIGN and the development of programmes and courses**

1.1. **Being more explicit about our educational goals to provide students with clarity, purpose and direction**

From January 2017 we will start implementing our new University Graduate Profile (GP), a statement which reflects our vision and hopes for graduating students. An ‘embedded graduate profile’ will be developed for each named University qualification, starting with our large bachelor’s degrees and moving on to postgraduate degrees. Embedded profiles will consist of a discrete list of programme level capabilities that are aligned conceptually with the ‘themes’ of the University GP. By the end of the next period and for the first time in our history we aim to have embedded a united approach to graduate outcomes that reflects the University’s educational aspirations and its graduate focus.

**Initiatives:**
- Define and embed the GP across all programmes and develop a library of profiles
- Develop appropriate course outlines, continuity plans and their consistent use in Canvas
- Produce public facing information about courses via Canvas’ Syllabus page, with a searchable website to locate course information

1.2. **Creating more coherence in the curriculum with aligned assessments**

The ability to provide context and a broad learning framework enables students to understand and articulate the attributes and capabilities that they are developing. From a teaching perspective, the process of mapping a network of related courses ensures content and progression across courses is clear and meaningful. It also means assessments can be designed with appropriate challenge and allow students to demonstrate skills and understanding suited to a course and programme.

**Initiatives:**
- Building on the exploratory work conducted in 2014 by the Curriculum Mapping Reference group, we will continue to explore and develop a family of analytic tools and methodologies to support the mapping of knowledge and the creation of learning outcomes. These tools will also support staff with curriculum planning, review and delivery of the University GP.
- Review of all assessment types has been initiated by an institutional working group
Refine our ability to deliver individual and group work assessments to ensure fairness and consistency. Guidelines and learning opportunities will be developed to support teachers.

1.3. Increasing opportunities for students to apply their learning through integrative and experiential experiences

A priority in many programmes will be to leverage the University’s new employer engagement strategy and supporting infrastructure put in place by CDES to increase experiential learning opportunities for students within their academic programmes, including practicums, clinical placements, projects, internships, externships, summerships, work experience, job shadowing and volunteering. In partnership with Faculties, this multi-year project will build the infrastructure and relationships to support these opportunities.

1.4. Evolving course delivery methods and classroom experiences

The approach to course delivery has changed in some areas. Technology developments will further allow for self-directed, blended and online learning environments—where appropriate. In turn, this allows the classroom experience to be redesigned around applied, active and peer learning. In some cases this will require a rethinking of content and course structure. We will continue to experiment with a range of methods and provide opportunities for teachers to develop new techniques and ideas, and seek to provide the appropriate tools and physical environments.

1.5. Developing programmes and pathways – Academic portfolio project and programme reviews

The Academic Portfolio project being conducted by faculties presents an opportunity to build long-term plans and to prepare for new teaching capabilities. More generally, teaching evaluations, surveys and ongoing programme and disciplinary reviews all provide a basis for continuous improvement and targeted programme development.

Initiatives
- Provide targeted support for Faculties to enable strategic teaching initiatives, including new programmes and curriculum development.

Theme 2: DELIVERY: Enhancing courses and teaching capability

2.1. Providing teacher and curriculum development to support change

The ongoing work of central units such as CLeaR and Library and Learning Services, along with specialised support in some Faculties, provides a strong platform for all areas of teaching and programme development. These
initiatives create a supportive culture where assistance and advice is available for change and improvement projects.

In addition to CLeaR’s workshops, seminars and teaching consultations, the following programmes will be further strengthened to develop our teaching capacity:

- The Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, for academics who wish to become more research-informed teachers by earning a CUAP-accredited higher education teaching certificate;
- The CLeaR Fellowship programme, which brings together an annual cohort of academics from across the Faculties to work on teaching-related research projects with a common theme;
- The Doctoral Academic Leadership Initiative (DALI), a year-long programme for doctoral students who intend to pursue an academic career;
- The Teaching Catalyst, which is mandatory for all new-to-teaching academic staff at the University;
- The Supervision programme, for academics who are new to supervision and/or who wish to further develop their supervision practices;
- Tutor training workshops for graduate teaching assistants, lab demonstrators and peer tutors and mentors.

Library and Learning Services engage with programmes at a curricular level to support the integration of academic and information skills. The programme of work typically involves analysing, mapping and supporting the design of the curriculum, assisting with graduate profiles, and improving information and academic literacies through a range of contextualised online and classroom activities.

2.2. Developing greater capacity for learning in alternative delivery formats

We will develop teacher skills in flexible learning, alternative delivery formats and alternative timetabling to improve the student experience, optimize the use of our physical classroom spaces and enhance the quality of our learning outcomes. This flexibility will allow us to test models of delivery and understand more about the techniques and practices which engage students more effectively.

Initiatives
- Provide information and resources to support experimentation
- Improve the lecture recording experience for staff and students by adding functionality and analytics
- Provide tools and resources to help create rich media learning experiences and alternative learning experiences
- Support the development of virtual reality learning experiences in disciplines where outcomes can be improved
- Improve our Wifi and physical spaces to provide appropriate learning environments

2.3. Enhancing our understanding of student learning through learning analytics and evaluation

We will increase our understanding of how we can use an unprecedented amount of learner data now available in Canvas to enhance student outcomes. A Reporting & Analytics Working Group will investigate international best practice, the needs of our context and develop a framework for utilising analytics across all our programmes. Based on this work we will develop a set of business requirements and long-term plan for analytics, recognising student privacy requirements. By the end of the period we expect that user-friendly, analytics tools will be in the hands of every teacher and academic leader seeking to understand and enhance the performance of their students, and improve outcomes for priority groups such as Māori & Pacific students

2.4. Digitising teaching and assessment practices where appropriate

Managing the assessment process is an integral part of most courses and often a substantial component of a teacher’s workload. Receiving timely and quality feedback on assessment can also enhance a student’s learning experience. A priority will be to test the use of online assessment and feedback tools where they will improve the educational process for both teachers and students.

Initiatives
- Explore options for computerised exams to align with upcoming changes in NCEA and school-based assessments
- Review current techniques and approaches and explore how the nature of assessment may change over time
- Investigate online marking to see how teachers could work effectively and provide rich feedback
- Explore systems for the submission return paper-based scripts electronically, including exams.
- Continue to develop processes to support the delivery of e-book and copyright materials (LLS)

2.5. Utilise quality measures to inform teaching design

Our ongoing goal is to develop objective measures and benchmarks to inform the development of our learning environment and to review performance against these measures. The evaluation of teaching will be encouraged as formative and summative inputs to the improvement process.

Initiatives:
- Develop capacity in formative feedback to further engage students in the development of the teaching process
- Refine and embed the use of summative evaluations.

**Theme 3: PREPARATION and SUPPORT: Improving access and support for all students**

Ongoing developments in the secondary sector will help inform the way we transition students to the university environment. Through our preparation pathways and investments in academic training, we seek to ensure a baseline of skills to support the success of all students. This requires a tandem of activities with the Tuakana, ELE, the Pacific Studies programme, Academic Integrity course, DELNA and skills workshops.

**Initiatives:**
- Support the University’s identified equity groups
- Develop further resources and approaches to develop student skills, including numeracy and literacy for Stage 1 students
- Increase our efforts to prevent plagiarism
- Support teachers to embed skills development in the curriculum
- Foundation studies and pre-university pathways
- Preparation and support for mature learners

**Theme 4: LEADERSHIP and RECOGNITION**

There are ongoing opportunities to acknowledge teaching leadership and build a leadership culture around our pedagogical research and practice.

**Initiatives:**
- Expand our research related to pedagogical issues by identifying and supporting opportunities related to the delivery of our programmes
- Highlight and support disciplinary and programme leaders who are role models for building a teaching culture, including PTFs and their contribution to the learning environment
- Develop the profile and interest in university and faculty teaching awards
- Encourage and support the applications and process for LEGs, VCSD Fund, SEED grants and external grants
- Embed the leadership commitments of Course Directors and their responsibilities.