In this bumper issue of *academix*, we welcome two new academic staff members to CleaR, introduce our 2017 CleaR Fellows and bring you news of learning and teaching initiatives from across the University.

Dr Matu Ratima is our new Academic Developer (Māori), whom many of you may remember from when he held a similar role in the Centre for Academic Development four years ago. Also new to our team is Dr Evija Trofimova, whose 3-year post-doctoral fellowship is supported by the Schuler Educational Enhancement and Development (SEED) Fund, a philanthropic grant supporting innovations in higher education teaching and research. Look for more details about the SEED Fund in our next issue. In the meantime, check out our back page for an announcement of CleaR’s new SEED Grants for Innovation in Teaching, which will support small-scale teaching initiatives around our 2017 theme, ‘Writing, writing everywhere’.

The writing theme will also be advanced by our 2017 CleaR Fellows, whose projects address aspects of academic writing ranging from first-year student writing to the possibilities and pleasures of creative practice research. Meanwhile, our current Fellows have been hard at work on an ambitious range of projects under the 2016 ‘Engaging with Elearning’ theme. Their work will be showcased as part of the CleaR Learning and Teaching Symposium in November, for which we are also currently seeking ideas for lunchtime posters and events. Mark your calendars now!

Also in this issue, you will find feature articles on a wide range of teaching and learning initiatives from across the University. You can also catch up on CleaR programmes including the CleaR Light’s Leadership in Teaching Programme and the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, which celebrates its tenth birthday this year.

Enjoy!

Helen Sword
Professor and Director
Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education (CLeaR)

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**CleaR Fellows 2017**

The theme for the 2017 CleaR Fellowship programme is ‘Writing, writing everywhere’. The new cohort of Fellows are on a mission. What is that mission? To encourage students to write more accurately, more imaginatively, more elegantly, more thoughtfully, more persuasively, more critically, more creatively or simply... more. No opportunity will be lost. The time is ripe to motivate, inspire, cajole and coerce students across the Faculties to write, write, write. Please join us in welcoming the 2017 CleaR Fellows.

**Anuj Bhargava, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences**

As a teaching fellow in second year Physiology, Anuj observes the challenges his students face as they transition from first to second year. It is a challenge to move them from thinking about the subject as a collection of facts to be memorised towards a deeper understanding of concepts and scientific ways of thinking. If they lack the requisite taxonomy of learning, they tend to struggle with writing. Anuj has been involved in a collaboration with Libraries and Learning Services to develop self-help online academic literacy tools. In his Fellowship year, he would like to hone his skills in developing resources and foster collaborative cross-faculty relationships to enable versions of online resources that can be adopted more widely.

**Esther Fitzpatrick, Faculty of Education and Social Work**

Esther is a lecturer in the School of Learning, Development and Professional Practice and a Co-Director of the Narrative and Metaphor Special Interest Network. For her PhD, she investigated and implemented a range of creative writing technologies and has begun to use some of them in her teaching. Her Fellowship programme will focus on, firstly, discovering what writing ‘technologies’ are currently employed in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, with particular reference to innovative writing technologies used to engage students and enhance their potential for success. She also aims to design and implement workshops to explore writing technologies that can be used in tutorials.

**Shireen Junpath, Business School**

In her role in the Faculty’s Innovative Learning Team, Shireen supports students identified through DELNA (Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment) screening. Writing tasks present a key challenge for students, especially if English is their second language. To help them, the team recently introduced online writing tools, including Grammarly, Lextutor and Academic Phrasebank. Shireen will research how students at all levels engage with the tools, interviewing and surveying them to get their perspectives on the various tools’ effectiveness for writing and learning. She sees this as a pilot for further studies in writing and literacy in higher education. She aims to develop a sustainable package of resources, to communicate her research with special interest groups and to present at various educational conferences.
Writing, writing everywhere

Dr Alys Longley, Faculty of Creative Arts and Industries

Alys is a senior lecturer on the Dance Studies programme. Although the value of intuitive, playful and unpredictable studio methods is well accepted in creativity research, conventional forms of academic writing emphasise research that is predictable and formulaic. In some circumstances, this can constrain, rather than enable creative research. For her Fellowship project, Alys proposes, firstly, to interview practice-led researchers throughout the University to inquire about the forms of writing they find most helpful or constraining in developing their research and, secondly, to run a series of workshops on writing for creative-practice research, in which different models of writing are discussed, tested and developed.

Dr Jenny Mendieta Aguilar, Libraries and Learning Services (LLS)

Jenny is a Learning Adviser at Student Learning Services. She has a background in language teaching. LLS is currently developing a ‘Writing at Stage One’ online resource, to promote entry-level students’ understanding of the basic concepts underpinning the conventions of academic writing at tertiary level. Her fellowship project aims to assess student engagement with the resource (through observation and the learning analytics in Canvas and CourseBuilder) and to get student feedback on its usefulness and relevance (through focus group or individual interviews). She then intends to disseminate the findings to all interested parties within and beyond LLS through presentations and workshops.

Dr Mehdi Shahbazpour, Faculty of Engineering

Mehdi is a Lecturer in the Department of Mechanical Engineering. Technical and formal report writing usually dominates in his discipline, but in practice there are many non-technical grey areas where engineers would benefit from critical reflective thinking. Students in Mehdi’s two final year project-based courses submit weekly ‘Reflections on Learning’ and a larger reflective piece which aims to integrate learning from an industry-based project, experience in teamwork, and insights and knowledge gained from the lectures. Student feedback has been excellent and Mehdi would also like to analyse over 1000 submissions to answer questions about what give most benefits, future guidelines for reflection, assessment of reflective writing, whether emerging themes and patterns can lead to better course delivery and whether reflective writing could be a valuable learning tool for more technical courses.

Dr Rosemary Wette, Faculty of Arts

Rosemary is a Senior Lecturer in Applied Language Studies in the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics. In 2014 she was Chair of the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee Reference Group on “Writing Skills at Stage One.” It is her view, and this was also a finding of the Reference Group, that with regard to academic literacy, there is a tendency to emphasise deficiency, remediation and English language issues, and to overlook challenges faced by incoming students in learning the reading, thinking and composing processes needed to comprehend, synthesise and transform specific information to create discipline-specific outputs. In her Fellowship year, Rosemary’s aims relate to rebutting the notion that poor writing is the students’ “fault”, and promoting and developing collaborations and resources that will position writing as an integral, on-going part of disciplinary learning.

Associate Professor Caroline Yoon, Faculty of Science

Caroline is a mathematics educator and poet, who feels for her students when they receive their first essay assignment. Many of her students are mathematicians, who see writing as fundamentally different to mathematics: they see writing as ephemeral, temperamental and context-dependent, and mathematics as enduring, universal, and context-free. They come to believe that writing is outside the natural skillset of the mathematician, and that one’s mathematical training not only neglects one’s development as a writer, but also actively prevents it. Caroline’s Fellowship project will challenge this view by highlighting similarities between mathematics and writing. She will examine the mathematical processes that mirror the writing process, design and offer writing workshops for mathematics education students, and disseminate the outcomes in a journal article. She also hopes to explore and refresh her own poetic writing with other Fellows.

Associate Professor Dawn Garbett from the Faculty of Education and Social Work will lead the 2017 CLeaR Fellowship Programme.

You can contact her by email at d.garbett@auckland.ac.nz or by phone at +64 9 373 7599 ext 48972.
CLeaR eagerly looks forward to working with Dr Evija Trofimova, who has recently been appointed as a SEED (Schuler Educational Enrichment and Development) Fund post-doctoral Research Fellow. For the next three years she will work with CLeaR staff to research and support innovative practices in pedagogy and scholarly writing. Her work will also feed into the CLeaR Fellowship theme for 2017, “Writing, writing everywhere”, which seeks ways to encourage students across our university to write more imaginatively, critically and elegantly.

Evija comes from far away. She grew up and earned her bachelors and masters degrees in Humanities/English in Riga, the capital of the tiny yet colourful Baltic state of Latvia. Here she says that she acquired her Eastern European sensibilities (a love for languages, cultures, and cobblestoned streets, and a slight inclination towards melancholy). Back in Latvia, she also worked as an Arts journalist.

Since 2008, Auckland has been Evija’s other home. She completed her PhD in English at the University of Auckland in 2012. Soon afterwards, Bloomsbury Academic published her work as Paul Auster’s Writing Machine: A Thing to Write With. In her review, Dr Aliki Varvogli from Dundee University says Evija “offers a dazzling critical reassessment of Auster’s oeuvre... reading this book is like wearing a pair of magic spectacles that help us to see things anew, and to see new things. A book to cherish.”

The book explores the role that writing paraphernalia plays in Auster’s creative processes. Not only is Evija interested in the tools, spaces and habits of writers, but also in the bigger question that begs exploration: the changing notions of what it means ‘to write’ and be ‘a writer’ in the Digital Age. She finds herself at the increasingly busy intersection of discourses surrounding critical-creative processes, literary studies, and the materialities of writing.

She has taught classes in English, Drama and Writing Studies, including a large course that sets out to explore the various kinds of writing and literacies one encounters within and outside the university. Questions surrounding creative and critical writing, both as a process and outcome, will also be explored within the SEED Fund projects. Evija aims to contribute as a researcher, teacher, journalist, and - she hopes - writer.

**Welcome, Evija Trofimova!**

You may be one of the anxious researchers paying more attention than usual to writing up articles in the hopes of beating the PBRF cut-off at the end of 2017. Or perhaps your focus is on supporting these research writers, angling for how to design their PBRF portfolio or providing different kinds of writing scaffolding. Some are setting up peer writing groups, which have a surprisingly long history, a range of permutations, and an established record of success (Aitcheson & Guerin, 2014).

CLeaR’s Dr Barbara Kensington-Miller decided to facilitate a one-semester course for research writers who had completed analysis and were ready to write. In her 2014 pilot, Barbara drew upon a framework that scaffolds an article produced in 12 weeks (Belcher, 2009). With co-teacher Dr Susan Carter, she adapted the course for participants, pulling in additional resources and approaches, and giving time to do peer review of writing at each weekly session. Although some participants seek discipline-compatible colleagues who might understand their dense prose better, others in the class have found that the level of clarity required for an intelligent reader from another discipline improves their writing for the intended audience of experts.

We felt that some of the resources Barbara and Susan find helpful might be of interest to others. One short book suggests How to Write a Lot (Sylvia, 2010) by making writing a scheduled affair recorded in Excel. Alternatively, a more rounded approach considers wider aspects of journal article production while still focusing on how it might be done effectively (Murray, 2013). The Writer’s Diet’s ‘Take the Test’ software (Sword, 2015) gives instant feedback that many in the CLeaR course found helpful; her books anatomise the issue of style engagingly. Those struggling for writing clarity should give half an hour or so to The Science of Science Writing, a succinct article that demonstrates how it is done and provides a neat formula (Gopen & Swan, 1990).

In an ideal world, we write for more than the impetus of PBRF. It is pleasing to share our research with others in our field. Through publication, we make professional friends and become part of a like-minded community. We develop our thinking by writing; the process itself provides fertile ground to grow and test our ideas. These are just two of the reasons that research writing is not simply notchting up a score.

**References and resources**


Lighting an academic pathway

First introduced in 2014, the CLeaR LighTs programme is designed to help early-career academics and seasoned lecturers alike to assemble persuasive teaching portfolios, try out pedagogical initiatives and develop evidence of leadership in teaching (‘LighTs’ = Leadership in Teaching). This year we’ve made some changes that aim to encourage networking, to give the LighTs opportunities to say what they want from the programme, and to enable us to work towards fulfilling those needs.

Dr ‘Ema Wolfgamm-Foliaki (the current coordinator for the programme), Zoë Pollard (Academic Programmes Administrator) and Linda Madden (CLeaR research assistant) are excited about the new directions the programme is heading in. Rather than seeing the LighTs as individuals who may simply attend learning events, this year they are actively encouraging them to form a cohort which builds networks across faculties and disciplines, and develops into a community of practice.

LighTs have the opportunity to build a relationship with a CLeaR staff member (‘navigator’) who helps guide them along the academic pathway. This feature remains as an important part of the programme. In a one-to-one consultation, each CLeaR LighT and their ‘navigator’ will put together a tailored plan of action for the year. It may incorporate seminars, short courses, communities of practice or even a mini-MOOC.

This year, the team has added an informal event at the beginning to welcome the LighTs. It’s an opportunity to learn more about the programme, start to get to know each other and to meet the CLeaR ‘navigators’. Instead of being offered a predetermined suite of workshops, the LighTs were invited to identify their desired outcomes from the programme and set their own itinerary for their journey. In consultation with fellow staff members, the ‘navigators’ could then tailor courses and workshops to align with those aims. Feedback was positive with a number of participants remarking how ‘awesome’ it was to be part of a programme that was focusing on their individual needs and goals.

Two main pathways emerged, leading towards promotion and a deeper understanding of elearning.

We have followed this up with personal invitations to CLeaR events that align with those goals. For example, the LighTs were invited to attend our Question and Answer workshop based on changes and requirements in the new academic career portfolio (ACP). A number of the LighTs attended, thus gaining a better understanding of what is required when applying for promotion or continuation. CLeaR is also tailoring new workshops with the Light’s goals in mind.

A mid-year catch-up will provide another opportunity for the cohort to meet as a group, to reflect on where they’re heading in relation to their stated goals, to evaluate their progress, give feedback on the various aspects of the programme and to indicate what they would like to get from the programme before the end of the year.

CLeaR is currently planning an online gallery of ‘stars’ to highlight a community that is passionate about teaching and learning. Since its inception, CLeaR has been working towards a comprehensive, coherent suite of academic development programmes for University of Auckland staff at all stages of their careers.

Happy Birthday, PGCert!

This year the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (the ‘PG Cert’) turns ten. Over the last decade, 64 University of Auckland staff members have become students again to complete the programme and receive an internationally-recognised qualification.

CLeaR feels honoured to have had the opportunity to teach – and learn from – them. A glance through the PGCert gallery on the CLeaR website, reveals an alumni with an impressive array of awards for excellence in teaching and learning. Many now hold leadership roles within their departments and are on University and Faculty committees, being strong advocates for teaching and learning.

...and by the way

The Doctoral Programme facilitated by CLeaR has been renamed. Previously known as DACM (Doctoral Academic Careers Module), it is now the Doctoral Academic Leadership Initiative (DALI). The programme presents a series of fortnightly seminars over two semesters, with a focus on leading in academia, teaching, research and professionalism. Dr Alistair Kwan coordinates the programme.
Formative evaluation (aka formative feedback) of courses and teaching is gathered during a course and enables you to reflect on the feedback and respond to it as soon as possible – whether or not changes can be made. It can be flexible and answer to a range of purposes and needs. It can reveal much about your courses and teaching that summative feedback cannot and that, if addressed, can have a real impact on student learning. And it demonstrates that you are committed to students’ learning and your teaching.

It need not take a lot of time and resources, but formative evaluation can bring enormous benefits for your students and for your teaching practice.

- Using formative evaluation of courses can enable you to ascertain how learning activities and resources are working for students.
- Using formative evaluation of teaching, aside from giving you immediate feedback on your teaching approach and strategies, can help you demonstrate teaching excellence for career advancement and teaching awards.

Also, involving students in evaluation can help them to understand the importance of evaluation as a skill. It may also contribute to better response rates for summative evaluations.

**What should I do with it?**

Respond to the feedback in a timely fashion. If changes are to be made, explain how and why. If no changes are to be made, explain why not. Students appreciate having their feedback taken seriously.

Write up what you did, the feedback you got, and how you intend to respond to that feedback. These reflections will prove valuable for the course review process and for you to document your teaching for APR, promotion or continuation purposes.

**Formative evaluation tool for Tutors, Graduate Teaching Assistants and Demonstrators**

CLeaR has recently developed a Qualtrics survey for formative assessment. Tutors, Graduate Teaching Assistants and Demonstrators, for whom SET (Summative Evaluation Tool) is not available, may find the survey useful to evaluate your teaching for self-reflection and career development, students’ learning and your teaching.

**Useful tips**

- Be clear about the purpose of the evaluation!
- Start small! Implement and evaluate manageable and sustainable changes, one at a time.
- Let your students know the results of the evaluation.
- Use more than one formative feedback method to reach a greater number of students.

For more detail go to the Guide to formative assessment on the Planning Office’s website, Enhancement and Evaluation of Courses and Teaching.

www.auckland.ac.nz/evaluate
## How should I do it?

### Notice how students behave and achieve

Make a real effort to notice the behaviour of students in class. Who comes prepared? What kinds of questions do students ask? What grabs their attention? When does their attention drift? Noticing can lead good teachers to structure their classes differently, for example, by building in mini-breaks or different activities when the attention of the class needs to be re-engaged.

### Informal peer review from a colleague

Get a colleague to observe your teaching and provide feedback on it, preferably both verbally and in writing. Peer observation and review of teaching is a collaborative voluntary, formative and collegial process. It may provide support for a new staff member or form part of an evidential Teaching Portfolio submitted for Annual Performance Review, continuation or promotion, or teaching awards.

CLeaR has a guide to peer review of teaching: [www.flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/guide-to-peer-review-of-teaching](http://www.flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/guide-to-peer-review-of-teaching)

### Do a quick and easy survey of the students

A quick and easy survey of students on their views of the course or your teaching can identify and correct any issues they have in a timely manner.

Before you start, identify your objectives (what you want to know and why).

Decide whether you want to

- Survey the whole class or a smaller group.
- Do it in class or online.
- Do it halfway through or after the class.

Questions should be simple and may be open-ended, e.g. “What helped you to learn in this lecture?” or more specific, e.g. “What is one small change I could make that would help you learn more effectively in this course?”

In a face-to-face situation, you could provide a suggestion box for anonymous feedback, or simply give students Post-It notes and ask them to post their feedback on the rear wall or door as they leave.

Online, you can create a survey using a Canvas quiz or the Qualtrics survey developed by CLeaR. The latter has guides to help you set the survey up, and view the results.

How to set up your survey: [http://tinyurl.com/jmy57pk](http://tinyurl.com/jmy57pk)

How to view the results: [http://tinyurl.com/zwnkqc](http://tinyurl.com/zwnkqc)

### SGID (Small group instructional diagnosis)

SGID is a technique for collecting data from students about their reactions to teaching. It takes 20 to 30 minutes of class time. According to Munro (1998), “In the SGID process, students at the instruction of a trained facilitator, collaborate in small groups to assess the lecturer and course. With the help of the facilitator, students then reach a class consensus on their strengths and weaknesses, which is later reported to the lecturer by the facilitator.” For more information, see the references opposite.

### References


The Science Scholars Programme is a new initiative for gifted and talented students who are enrolled in a BSc at the University of Auckland. Although common overseas, this is the first programme of its kind in New Zealand. The first cohort started in 2015 and feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive.

The challenge to the steering committee was to create an excellent and rewarding enrichment programme for our best and brightest Science students – our most curious and engaged – to help them grow to become “whole” scientists. Rather than extending the students in their major, the programme builds on their curiosity, exposing the students to a range of topics from the Big Bang, through to gender equality in Science.

Students are chosen based on a holistic view of their potential to succeed as scientists. Although a certain academic standard is required, what is far more important is a student’s enthusiasm for and engagement with science. There are two entry points into the programme. An intake of 50 students is taken directly into first year from high school. An additional 50 students are added to that cohort at the beginning of their second year.

The Science Scholars enrol in a dedicated course each semester. In most cases, the dedicated Science Scholars course is not for credit. In spite of this, Scholars’ attendance at the scheduled two-hour session each week is almost 100% – they are there for the love of science and the love of discussing science with their peers.

“The Science Scholars acts as a bit of a meeting place for high quality from within and beyond the Faculty of Science. I was a bit surprised by the level of interest to participate by my colleagues – to the extent that if they are not asked, they take it slightly amiss! A lot of very good scientists are really keen to teach these students.”

Professor James Sneyd, Science Scholars course coordinator.

The sessions are very hands-on. Most weeks there is a guest presenter. This could be someone from within the faculty, a visiting academic or someone from the wider community. The presenter’s role is not to lecture the students but rather to spark interesting discussions both between the students and between the presenter and the students. The Scholars particularly enjoy this opportunity to share ideas with like-minded individuals. An essential element of the delivery is that these sessions are interactive. This interaction very much helps the cohort to bond, with many of the students becoming good friends.

An important component of the programme is mentoring. Each Science Scholar is assigned a research active academic mentor, with whom they meet every couple of weeks. A lot of students have commented that having time to talk to an academic one-to-one is one of the best parts of the programme. The second year students also act as student mentors to the first year students. As well as giving support to the first year students this helps to form bonds between the year groups.

Another fundamental aspect of the programme is the students’ engagement with research at an undergraduate level. In the second year, students develop a research question they would like to investigate in conjunction with an academic member of staff. In the third year, students work on answering this question.

The presenter’s role is not to lecture the students but rather to spark interesting discussions both between the students and between the presenter and the students. The Scholars particularly enjoy this opportunity to share ideas with like-minded individuals.

It is not just the students who are enjoying the programme. Many of the mentors have commented on how much they have learnt from their mentees. They have been reminded what it is like to be an undergraduate again. The guest speakers always comment on how much they have enjoyed their session and how refreshing it is to work with such an engaged and inquisitive group of students.

“The Science Scholars acts as a bit of a meeting place for high quality from within and beyond the Faculty of Science. I was a bit surprised by the level of interest to participate by my colleagues – to the extent that if they are not asked, they take it slightly amiss! A lot of very good scientists are really keen to teach these students.” Professor James Sneyd, Mathematics, Science Scholars course coordinator.

The Science Scholars programme started with help from the Vice-Chancellor’s Strategic Development Fund. The original steering committee comprised Professor Richard Easther (Head of Physics), Professor David Williams (Chemistry) and Associate Professor Cather Simpson (Chemistry and Physics). This team has since been joined by Glenda Haines (Student and Academic Services Manager) and Dr Nicolette Rattenbury (Science Scholars coordinator).

For more information:

If you are interested in more information about the Science Scholars programme, including how to apply, please contact Dr. Nicolette Rattenbury at nicolette.rattenbury@auckland.ac.nz or visit the Science Scholars website at www.sciencescholars.auckland.ac.nz.
Vanamali Joseph, first year Science Scholar

“Science scholars to me personally is a way to wind down and think about the wider implications of science. It provokes discussion, interesting conversations, arguments and reminds me that science isn’t only about rote learning and sitting exams – there is curiosity, creativity, passion involved. It’s intertwined with politics, religions, arts, economics, humanities.

Science isn’t just stand alone information, it’s only one side of a multi-faced die that is life. The Science Scholars Programme allows me to appreciate the interconnectedness of science to wider society – something simple that a lot of first years tend to forget.

“Science isn’t just stand alone information, it’s only one side of a multi-faced die that is life. The Science Scholars Programme allows me to appreciate the interconnectedness of science to wider society – something simple that a lot of first years tend to forget.”

Vanamali Joseph

Isabella Francis, first year Science Scholar:

“Science Scholars has widened my experience of science: now I can see that it is a discipline with many varied impacts on society. Pressure to succeed in university papers is really tiring, so it’s lovely to have time each week just to explore and expand my views on science with like-minded students. I have also enjoyed the topics on the politics of science, like scientific funding, open-access journals, and scientific reporting, because they have opened my eyes to many ways in which politics and science intersect and influence each other, which is fascinating to me.”

Isabella Francis

Some of the 2015 First Year class of Science Scholars. Left to right: Andrea Soffe, Charlotte-Rose Rennie-Younger, Catherine Webb, Peter Wills, Stephanie Townend, Maggie Xu, Anthony Nicholson, Andy Wong, Mu-Ming Pan, Jessica Patterson.

A typical Science Scholars class. Professor Hinke Osinge (Mathematics, Science Scholars coordinator) and Dr Siouxsie Wiles (Bioluminescent Superbugs Lab, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, Winner 2013 Prime Minister’s Prize for Science Media Communication, Science Scholars coordinator) examine a presentation with the students on the left. The discussions that follow are intense and fun.
Teaching the teachers

Graduate Teaching Assistants, Teaching Assistants, Tutors, lab demonstrators, mentors ... there are hundreds of postgraduate students all around the University working to provide students with high quality learning experiences. They need to be able to answer questions, provide pastoral care, and to share both their knowledge and their experience as students. But where do they learn the skills?

The answer is that it is different all around our University. The mechanisms for engaging a class – and keeping yourself safe – differ depending on the teaching culture of Schools, and are often discipline-dependent. At Stage One and Stage Two, tutorials and labs may be the only real engagement students have at classroom level. Often tutors are the closest contact undergraduates have with what they see as the ‘University’. And because students in different faculties have specific needs, tutors require specialised training to assist other students to learn.

Training for mentors in Engineering

Within the Faculty of Engineering, students begin study as a cohort, choosing specialisations in their second year. To assist with this competitive process, a mentor system has been established. The ‘Part 1 Assistance Centre’ runs a drop-in clinic that draws on the experience and education of second and third year students, to support first year students with their worksheets, practice problems, test preparation and assignments.

“Not only do [the mentors] enjoy doing it, it helps their learning in order to teach it to someone else”.

Dr Keri Moyle, Associate Dean (Students) Faculty of Engineering

The mentors themselves attend a one-day training programme run by the faculty, and also receive a certificate of recognition that can go on their CVs. But the Associate Dean (Students) of Engineering, Dr Keri Moyle says that the value for the mentors themselves goes beyond the advantages to students. “Not only do they enjoy doing it, it helps their learning in that you have to understand content in order to teach it to someone else. Likewise, having teachers who have only just completed the course themselves, means that they still understand what it is like to not understand concepts, and can therefore help students in ways that are considerably different from a tutor or course coordinator.”

Training language teachers - online resources, observing experienced teachers, peer networks

In other areas of the University, tutors’ learning needs are dictated by the unique requirements of the discipline. For example, in the School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics (CLL), language labs run alongside more traditional discussion based tutorials. Not only do they need a firm grasp of the language the class is taught in, but without standard lectures, the language tutors are the only ones imparting instruction to students. To train language teachers appropriately, the School’s Academic Director, Dr Eduardo Piñeros, has developed an innovative system tailored to the unique needs of the graduate teachers.

“To be a good language teacher it takes time”, Eduardo says, “more than a one-hour meeting. It is a process and you need support throughout the whole first semester.”

As a first step to achieve this, Eduardo and his team compiled a tutor guide. This provides new tutors with a very comprehensive resource outlining information about procedures, services, and technologies at an institutional level. It then moves on to offer tips on teaching methods, duties and assessments. Although already easy to consult, the resource has since been uploaded to Canvas, resulting in a quick ‘one stop shop’ which links all the people involved in the process – course coordinators, the tutors themselves and the team working to provide the training. In spite of it being a lot of work to produce, Eduardo is confident that it is “an investment for the future”, saying that now all the structure is there, it will remain useful year after year.

However, the system is not restricted to a guidebook. The School has been active in developing a practical programme based on active learning and connecting tutors with more experienced staff. All tutors attend an initial one-hour induction outlining institutional information. From here, the group is divided up, and while the more conventional ‘facilitating tutors’ attend the generic tutor training through CLeaR, ‘language teachers’ go on to do a five-hour interactive training workshop with Eduardo’s team.

But support does not end when budding teachers start in the classroom! As Eduardo says, they inevitably begin to run out of ideas, and so the School organises tutors to do teaching observations on experienced teachers. Tutors make notes and reflect on the activities, methods and environments they observe. They then get together and share what they noticed, completing the loop by uploading their reflections to Canvas so Eduardo can see what they did. Not only does this give first year tutors the opportunity to follow models of good teaching practice, it also provides what Eduardo considers a valuable chance to interact with more senior staff. This is supported too, through seminars run twice per semester to introduce tutors to researchers who specialise in language acquisition.

A highly original new programme, then, has emerged through Eduardo and his team’s response to the School’s own needs. Run for the first time this year, he reports that it was “very, very appreciated. The comments were all very positive, one hundred percent. So the plan is to do it every year!”
Negotiating a range of requirements in a large and diverse faculty

In the Faculty of Science, the challenge of training tutors is not so much to provide a unique or singular service, but rather how to negotiate the range of tutoring requirements in a large and diverse Faculty. From laboratories and computer labs to classroom-based discussions, reading groups and role plays, tutors in Science are expected to engage with undergraduate classes in hugely diverse ways. Such discipline-specific teaching skills are difficult to acquire through generic training.

Associate Dean of Science Margaret Goldstone explains that, as in CLL, the Faculty of Science has a guidebook that tutors can work through with their supervisors. This is where they find access to resources and information on where to go for help. Tutors are also expected to attend a two stages of tutor training. First, there is standardised training across the faculty. Here – as executors rather than designers of the course – tutors are taught fundamental relationship building and group management skills more than learning styles and teaching methods.

In addition to both generic and localised training, the Faculty offers a ‘Tutoring in Science Certificate’. To qualify, tutors must do at least a year’s worth of teaching. Tutors are also now required to attend two extra, formal training programmes to do with teaching and learning, provided either through their department or by CLeaR.

Then tutors participate in localised departmental training delivered by people with an interest in and understanding of teaching. “When they do the departmental thing”, Margaret says, “that’s really special and they put the work in – departments create really good, responsive tutors and lab demonstrators at local level.”

In conclusion

While Eduardo’s training emphasises the need for purposeful, practical and applicable teaching of a hands-on skill, Margaret believes tutors ought to be learning how to engage individually with each and every student, opening up one-to-one conversations within the classroom. She says, “The fundamental thing is respect! If you are up behind the front desk you are lost – you are not the God figure here and if anyone leaves that room without being spoken to, you’ve failed. You have to eyeball them – even if it is just asking ‘what did you think of this morning’s lecture?’”  Professionalism is a good part of the training because, as Margaret says, “we have obligations in law, and we have obligations as humans. We want them to exercise both to the best of their abilities.”

It is these skills that Keri, Eduardo and Margaret all agree give value to the tutors and mentors through their experience of teaching. “Participation in the Part 1 Assistance Centre gives mentors the opportunity to solidify knowledge and experience leadership,” says Keri. Over in CLL, Eduardo reiterates this: language tutoring is a “great ground for them to perfect their skill … in order to convey it to others, it helps you advance your own learning. And because a teacher is a leader, it is a great step up in gaining responsibility and leadership”. In Science too, Margaret agrees that tutoring is enormously valuable. “That you’ve led something, had an engagement and bond with [students] that has contributed to their success”, she says, “is a powerful experience and valuable life skill that adds up to a tangible picture of what we regard our Graduate Profile – it fits right in.”

Post script

Earlier this semester, CLeaR received a request about the Teaching in Labs website which is publicly available on our elearning showcase. It had gone absent without leave, and has been reinstated to the requestor’s relief. You can find it at www.flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/teachinginlabs
Learning design network

This year a learning design Community of interest has begun meeting at CLeaR every four weeks. Learning designers and other elearning professionals from faculties and central units meet to share and discuss relevant topics. They have formulated purpose and vision statements as follows.

Our purpose is to:

- Share our learning design expertise to enrich the teaching and learning experience of staff and students.
- Advocate for the role of learning design contributing to University policy and practice.

Our vision is to inspire staff to design engaging teaching and learning experiences.

For more information, or if there is anything you would like them to discuss, contact Steve Leichtweis: s.leichtweis@auckland.ac.nz

Professional development in learning analytics (LA)

The Ako Aoteaora-funded project, ‘Building an evidence-base for teaching and learning design using learning analytics’, aims to develop a new model for professional development in LA. The model will involve a series of professional development scenarios for teachers based on case studies from each of the participating institutions and a staff survey on the usage of LA data for student learning. In-class trials are planned in Population Health, Engineering and Statistics. The analysis of student data will contribute to these case scenarios.

Discussions with key staff in participating institutions to identify policies governing access to, and use of, LA data will help provide a sound foundation for institutional policy and decision-making.

Using data to engage students

SRES (the Student Relationship Engagement System) is an acronym you may begin to hear bandied about. It is open source software developed at the University of Sydney to easily and efficiently collect and analyse student data on, for example, attendance and marks. Teachers have used SRES to send students personalised feedback, reminders and updates, as well as reach out to students who are at risk of failing a course of study. CLeaR is currently rolling out pilots in three large undergraduate courses, Stats 10x, ENGSCI and INFOSYS, using a version of SRES which has been extensively redeveloped at the University of Otago to suit our context. Implementation would not have been possible without a collaborative approach between lecturers/teaching teams, learning designers, IT specialists and code writers, and significant input from our 2016 CLeaR Fellows Drs Andrew Eberhard and Peter Bier as well as Dr Jason Stephens (2015 Fellow).

Ako Aoteaora report

The Ako Aoteaora report on e-Learning in tertiary education synthesises the outcomes from 38 Ako Aoteaora-supported elearning projects. The projects cover seven years of thoughtful engagement with elearning and tertiary education. The report sets the scene and offers a brief overview of findings and issues in each of six dimensions of elearning before summarising each project.

Access the report at: https://akoaoteaora.ac.nz/ako-aoteaora/ako-aoteaora/resources/pages/e-learning-tertiary-education-highlights-ako-aoteaora-supported-research

Elearning updates

Canvas - next steps - have your say

This year, our University has ridden a wave of online challenges, learning how to use new systems for learning management (Canvas) and reading lists (Talis). Canvas offers many opportunities to enhance learning and teaching and, now there’s been a chance to come up for air, we wondered what is envisaged as the next stage for Canvas.

Dr Kevin Morris, Director of Learning and Teaching, says, “I think our University has done very well implementing Canvas under really pressured conditions. I suspect we are currently using only about 20% of its power, and that’s probably where we’d expect to be at this stage. Over Semester One, it’s been really pleasing to see people beginning to appreciate and understand the opportunities the tool offers. They see the potential power of some of its functions and features to engage students.” Dr Brigida Orioli Figueira, Canvas team leader, has noticed that more and more people are using the online submissions, speeding up comments on assignments and allowing students to access the feedback straightaway. Canvas conferences are also proving quite popular, especially for tutorials and office hours.

Kevin says that they gave themselves this year to find out about how the system works and what staff, students and support staff like ITS need to make it work. He says that, because they didn’t know what people would want help with, this year they invested in the Canvas chat and phone functions and local Canvas facilitators. The next stage will be about easing people in to take more advantage of what Canvas offers. Kevin sees “a need to support both individuals and programmes when they ask for support to move their teaching in a new direction”. He says, “We already have quite a lot of data about the kinds of things people are interested in. That will help us work out how to provide them with support at scale as they move their teaching in a new direction.”

Kevin says that at the end of the year, there will be a review, which will include the support they need to offer during the next stage of Canvas implementation. Please let them know your feedback and any plans or ideas you think you will need support with by writing to: canvashelp@auckland.ac.nz
Engaging students in ‘toolbox’ courses

Her online picture for the course illustrates the exuberance JR brings to her teaching.

Associate-Professor Julie Rowland (JR) from Earth Sciences is on top of the world about her recent venture to improve a stage 2 ‘toolbox’ course with the judicious use of technology. She came to CLeaR mid-2015, fired up by a MOOC she had recently completed. Inspired by a desire to share knowledge globally, she was brimming with ideas to develop her own MOOC. After a conversation with staff from CLeaR’s Elearning Group and considerable reflection, she opted to blend face-to-face learning with online resources and activities and to make the resources publicly available.

EarthSci 204 usually has about 60 students including people from most of the target groups. Having set out to improve learning engagement and performance across the cohort, JR says, “I knew we’d nailed it when I read the exams – the best performance by the group and by individuals within the group in 13 years of teaching here. It’s the first time someone got 100% in the exam. Students feedback was overwhelmingly supportive of the course structure and delivery – they loved it and rated it as the best course in their experience to date.” So how did she achieve that?

JR thought carefully about what would work online. She deliberately designed materials to pique interest and ensure students had a sense that this was something that they could engage with, and she aligned resources, activities, and assessment.

She chose to take most of the learning of stereonets online, using a combination of video, practice exercises and tailored and assessed weekly homework exercises (a stereonet is a lower hemisphere graph on to which a variety of geological data can be plotted. It is widely used in many different branches of geology). Removing the stereonet ‘time-sink’, enabled her to extend group work in the lab.

Assisted by a photographically talented neighbour – whom she bribed with Italian takeaways and wine – she produced short videos – a late addition – also met with approval. At her own request, in-class quizzes proved a great incentive. The Canvas conferences, homework and group work to encourage students to engage more with the materials, with her and with each other. The in-class quizzes proved a great incentive. The Canvas conferences – a late addition – also met with approval. At her own request, one of the students joined Elaine in her office for the first Canvas conference. The other students loved having a peer there to get the dialogue started, saying, “It made it feel much less stilted’. At a well-attended focus group, student feedback was very positive and opportunities in lectures, labs, practice questions, the weekly homework, and in exam revision for which she posted example questions and answers online.

**deform /dɪˈfɜːm/ make ugly or misshapen, disfigure**

**deform /dɪˈfɜːm/ beautify**

Terminology of the structural geologist

Similarly, Dr Elaine Ballard used a blend of online and face-to-face learning to engage her students in learning linguistics for a Masters in Speech Language Therapy Practice.

Some of the cohort of about twenty students arrive with a background in linguistics, while others have no experience at all with the subject. For the latter group, this fundamental tool of their proposed profession can present as a bewildering anathema. This year Elaine used assessed in-class quizzes along with online resources and activities, Canvas conferences, homework and group work to encourage students to engage more with the materials, with her and with each other. The in-class quizzes proved a great incentive. The Canvas conferences – a late addition – also met with approval. At her own request, one of the students joined Elaine in her office for the first Canvas conference. The other students loved having a peer there to get the dialogue started, saying, “It made it feel much less stilted’. At a well-attended focus group, student feedback was very positive and constructive. As a result, Elaine will review some of the readings with the aim of reducing the time students need to spend. She was gratified when clinical tutors remarked that the students seemed more switched on, understanding more about language and applying it a lot more in clinic than previously.

Elaine and JR developed their materials as CourseBuilder websites which they embedded in the Learning Management System.
Some of you may remember Dr Matiu Ratima from his past role in academic development at the Centre for Academic Development and at CLeaR. Matiu is back with CLeaR after a period of teaching at the University of Otago, which included research at the University of Hawaii on a Fulbright Scholarship.

In 2013, Matiu left CLeaR and he and his family moved to Dunedin, where he took up a role as Senior Lecturer at the University of Otago, teaching Māori language on a range of courses. Towards the end of his time there, he received a Fulbright Scholarship to visit Hawaii to do research that compares the way the Māori language is taught in universities in New Zealand with the way the Hawaiian language is taught, specifically at the University of Hawaii. He plans to extend that research and publish his findings as his research focus in CLeaR.

Part of Matiu’s current brief is to teach the ACADPRAC 701 (teaching, learning and assessment), which is a year-long course in the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice. He’ll also be putting together a suite of core programmes for University of Auckland staff, including an introduction to Māori language, a programme promoting engagement with Māori and Pacific learners, and peer mentoring for Māori academics.

Matiu says that the way he teaches centres very much around relationship-building and making sure people have opportunities to work together and get to know one another. In the future, he would like to start making those things more explicit in his teaching. Dr David Mayeda’s research into Māori and Pacific educational success has piqued his interest, particularly the suggestion that when we use illustrative cases in our teaching, we should draw on local examples where possible. Matiu says, “More often than not, because we see ourselves as an international university, we use international cases, ignoring what’s going on in New Zealand. If we want to connect and be relevant to students, we should actually start using the local. If we want to encourage Māori and Pasifika success, we might consider what David calls the ‘browning of the curriculum’ but it is also relevant in other contexts – choosing, for example, local business cases if you’re in Business and local schools if you’re in Education.”

The Fulbright Scholarship was particularly relevant to Matiu. He says, “The key thing about the Fulbright scholarships is that Senator William J Fulbright had a mission to promote cross-cultural understanding between the United States and the rest of the world. He thought a great way of doing that would be to provide opportunities for academics and possible future community leaders from around the world to both spend some time in the US and get to understand American culture and, conversely, to send Americans into the world to foster their understanding of other cultures. You can apply for a Fulbright if you’ve got an idea around research or an idea around teaching in the University system. There are other categories, but those are the main ones. Mine was around research so I didn’t have to do any teaching while I was there. I just focused on gathering data around my research. The Fulbright is about cultural exchange, in the broadest sense. It just so happened that what I was doing related to indigenous culture but they’re interested in cultural exchange of any sort. While they look at educational or academic achievement, they also look at factors like the kind of person you are, your family life, your values, and your involvement in community because they’re looking for people who are going to be good ambassadors for their countries as well as having something to contribute in terms of teaching and research.”

Matiu’s Fulbright was a special one; his was a Fulbright–Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Scholar Award. Ngā Pae o te Maramatanga (NPM) is New Zealand’s Māori Centre of Research Excellence funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and hosted by the University of Auckland. Their website states, “NPM and Fulbright New Zealand have established an enduring and successful partnership in recent years. This relationship has created ongoing opportunities for Māori academics and students to study and experience life in the United States, not only building excellence in Māori research and development but also ensuring that Māori recipients can share their culture with their US contemporaries and contribute to the Fulbright programme’s vision of promoting mutual understanding through educational and cultural exchanges.”

You can contact Matiu, at m.ratima@auckland.ac.nz

For more information on Fulbright Scholarships visit: www.fulbright.org.nz/which-fulbright-award-is-right-for-me-2

Dr Matiu Ratima, pictured here with his ancestor Torea, the captain of the Mataatua canoe.
Innovative learning spaces

Innovative learning environments (ILEs) both respond to what we think makes good education and encourage a different sort of practice to the current norm. Chris Martin, Professional Development Specialist at Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT), is exploring ILEs for his Master of Professional Studies (Education) from the University of Auckland under the supervision of Dr Alistair Kwan (CLeaR). Chris is drawing on the affordances of the innovative design evident in the new building known as MIT Manukau or Te Waonui O Te Mātauranga to unpack the way pedagogy is influenced by space.

Chris says, “Looking at how we can use this space better got me thinking, ‘what does the space say to us?’” Focusing on the physical space, Chris uses an ‘emergent narrative’ approach to illuminate affordances rather than student or staff use of the new learning spaces.

Te Waonui O Te Mātauranga is constructed as five vertically layered levels, with each layer distinguished through colour. The floors are designed to reflect Māori poutama, or the staircase of knowledge, so rather than delineating spaces – you don’t go to a level to do x and another to do y – the construction delineates levels of learning and knowledge production. For the purpose of his Master’s degree, Chris has narrowed his research to a single level. “Of course,” he says, “there are issues with this as, if you look at it as an assemblage, elements of other levels work together in harmony.” The floor consists of open spaces with different classes operating in them, giving opportunities for them to come together in interdisciplinary space. For example high tables can be used as stand-up meeting spaces, low spaces for sketching, and breakout spaces for quiet work. In this way, the environment encourages collaboration and active learning.

Using ‘embodied observation’ of the spaces, Chris’s methods centre on walking through the environment and recording what it looks like, sounds like and feels like. Describing his methodology as ‘me being there’, Chris says that he researches first through vlogs (video logs): “Basically I stand in the space with my camera and talk about what I see.” He then reflects on the experience, building up his narrative and understanding of affordances from there.

Innovative as his methods are, however, the point of difference in the research is that Chris is exploring the affordances of the learning spaces by adopting two different perspectives, ‘laggard’ and ‘early adopter’. He explains, “I would look at, say, a table and think, ‘How would I use it if I was approaching it as a laggard? What would it tell me? What ideology is it promoting and how might I resist it?’ Or, as an early adopter, ‘How am I accepting an ideology that is different from what it might have been before?’”

Chris acknowledges that this needs to be put in a bigger framework. Conflicting understandings of pedagogy can result in tensions between the way spaces are utilised, as there is potential to replicate traditional learning environments by siloing classes to particular parts of the open floor. “As an early adopter,” he says, “the voice is one of frustration, because certain affordances affect what I can do pedagogically.” The thesis thus requires him to understand the affordances from different perspectives so to determine how the two groups may respond to the ideology of the space.

Chris says that usually people are concerned with early adopters and the significant mass of the early or late majorities, but he understands the need to reflect from other perspectives. This required thought and reading about the less researched position of the laggard. He says, “It means I have to identify that persona’s characteristics, and constantly evaluate my writing against that.” To convey this effectively in his thesis, Chris is considering writing different perspectives in different fonts – the laggard in a more traditional type font – like Garamond, for example – and the early adopter in a more ‘dotcom’ font that portrays the characteristics inherent to each persona. Chris says Alistair has really helped him in the areas of articulating his own positionality and of his thesis structure, especially given the unconventional format of the thesis. He says, “Working together to determine how I can encapsulate my methodology and the literature in my writing has been a less than easy task!” As a result, Chris acknowledges how “the work we are doing also places a lens on the way that you can do academic work, and how to present a thesis.”

The potential within the space for innovation in learning is clearly evident, but Chris recognises the need to bring together in harmony organisational factors – staff and student culture and space. Going ahead, Chris identifies the next logical step would be to research how such innovative learning spaces call to the students, and what their responses are – are they rebelling, agreeing or something else? His research offers a timely reflection into the implications for development of learning spaces. By experimenting with writing and trying to move beyond a more academic, jargonistic approach, Chris’ adoption of experiential personas creates new narratives and opens up conversation between the researcher and the reader. He says, “When you get an authentic voice, that’s when you get interesting stuff.”
CLeaR courses and workshop enrolments will use Career Tools from mid-August

The learning module in PeopleSoft HR was replaced by Career Tools in 2015. Career Tools promotes opportunities for career planning and development and will become CLeaR’s new enrolment system from mid-August.

From that time, academic staff will access a calendar view of development opportunities relevant to their role. Our website will automatically redirect enrolments and a quick reference guide will be made available via the intranet.

Staff already enrolled in upcoming courses will not need to take any action.

If you have any questions please contact clear@auckland.ac.nz

CLeaR a way to your academic future

Have you thought of applying for the Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCert) next year? It will help you:

- Promote student engagement and achievement.
- Incorporate new educational technologies in your teaching.
- Develop your research writing.
- Balance teaching, research and service.
- and much more.

You may even be eligible for a CLeaR Academic Development Bursary.

For more information, visit the CLeaR website or contact Zoe Pollard: z.pollard@auckland.ac.nz, +64 9 923 8356 / ext. 8835.

New University web presence

The University launched a colourful new central home page in May. In September, the Web Presence Improvement Programme aims to upgrade delivery of general content for future students, e.g., admission, enrolment, fees, and support services. It will then work across the University to migrate common content types (such as programmes and courses) and with individual faculties and research institutes on their specific content. Future phases are still in the planning stage.

For more information go to the Staff Intranet and search Web Presence Improvement Programme or contact webprogramme@auckland.ac.nz

SEED fund Innovation in Teaching awards

Applications are now being accepted for CLeaR’s new SEED Grants for Innovation in Teaching, which will provide 25 applicants with up to $5,000 each to support innovative or experimental approaches to learning and teaching. Priority will be given to projects that address CLeaR’s 2017 theme, ‘Writing, writing everywhere’.

There will be an information session for applicants from 12-1 pm on Thursday 15 September.

To find out more about the SEED Grants, register for the information session and how to apply, visit www.clear.auckland.ac.nz/app/seed

Applications close on 30 September.