

**UNIVERSITY
OF OTAGO
TE WHARE WÄNANGA O OTÄGO
ACADEMIC
AUDIT REPORT
CYCLE 3 NOVEMBER 2006**



New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit
Te Wāhanga Tātari Kaute Tohungatanga o ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa

University of Otago
Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo

For Board approval

Academic audit report

Cycle 3

November 2006

This audit report is the seventh report of Cycle 3 academic audits to be administered by the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit during the period 2003-2006.

The focus for Cycle 3 audits is:

- *teaching quality*
- *programme delivery, and*
- *the achievement of learning outcomes*

*The hardcopy printed version of this report is the version authorised by the Board.
An electronic version of the report is posted on the Unit's website.*

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PREFACE

BACKGROUND

The New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit was established in 1993 to consider and review New Zealand universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the academic quality and standards which are necessary for achieving their stated aims and objectives, and to comment on the extent to which procedures in place are applied effectively and reflect good practice in maintaining quality.¹

Cycle 1 academic audits were full institutional audits of the then seven universities; they were conducted during the period 1995-1998. Cycle 2 academic audits focussed on research policy and management, the research-teaching nexus and the support of postgraduate students, as well as a theme specific to each university; they were conducted during the period 2000-2001. In 2001, a full institutional academic audit was conducted at the eighth New Zealand university - the newly-created Auckland University of Technology.

Cycle 3 academic audits, of which this audit of the University of Otago is the seventh, are focused on:

- teaching quality,
- programme delivery, and
- the achievement of learning outcomes,²

and are being conducted over the period 2003-2006.

THE PROCESS OF AUDIT

The process of audit requires a self-review which informs an audit portfolio (structured with respect to the Cycle 3 framework) in which the university evaluates its progress towards achieving its goals and objectives related to the focus of the audit, identifies areas for improvement, and details intended plans, strategies and activities with respect to enhancement initiatives. After examining the portfolio, and seeking further information if necessary, the Audit Panel conducts interviews in an Audit Visit to the university to seek verification of materials read, and to inform an audit report which is structured in accordance with the framework for the conduct of Cycle 3 audits as set down in the Unit's 2002 *Academic audit manual*.³ The report commends good practice and makes recommendations intended to assist the university in its own programme of continuous improvement of quality and added value in the activities identified by the Unit as the focus of Cycle 3 audits.

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

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO ACADEMIC AUDIT

The University of Otago agreed to an academic audit visit in late July 2006, requiring the submission of the self-review portfolio by the beginning of April 2006. The panel appointed to carry out the academic audit of the University met in Wellington on 4 May 2006 for a Preliminary Meeting at which it evaluated the material it had received, and determined further materials required. The Chair of the panel and the Director of the Unit undertook a Planning Visit to the University on 29 May 2006 to discuss the supply of the further materials requested as well as arrangements for the Audit Visits to Dunedin and Christchurch. On 12 July 2006, the Chair of the panel, one auditor and the Director of the Unit made a half-day visit to

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

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

³ John M. Jennings (compiler), *Academic audit manual for use by the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit*, December 2002, Wellington, the Unit, 2002.

one of the Northern Campuses, the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, interviewing 36 staff and students. The four-day Audit Visit by the whole panel to the University in Dunedin took place on 24-27 July 2006, hosted by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Skegg. During the visit, the panel interviewed 185 members of staff, students and stakeholders. Nearly all interviews were held in the Council Chamber in the main University building, and the opportunity was taken to hold a half-day of interviews in the Information Services Building and to tour the Library, computer workstations and student learning support facilities in that building.

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

JOHN M. JENNINGS

DIRECTOR
November 2006

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SUMMARY

GENERAL

- The University of Otago has a strong reputation for high-quality education, a student-centre culture and a lively and distinctive campus life.
- Changes to the senior management team have brought new approaches to strategic processes, and the University is commended for the increasing collegiality and the reported strength of communication and relations between the University community and the senior executive.
- The University contributes in a significant way to the life of Dunedin and is commended for the strength and depth of relationships between the City and the University, and for the pride in the University held by the community.
- In general, processes are working effectively in a devolved administrative environment, but there is evidence of some variability in the implementation and interpretation of policies across Departments.
- The University has recently adopted the *Strategic direction to 2012* and has established working groups to develop objectives and strategies in the areas of six strategic imperatives. The University is commended for the inclusive nature of consultation and involvement in the development of operational plans.
- The maintenance of standards and the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment have been devolved to Divisions and Departments. Such a system of devolved responsibilities requires a clear and accountable institutional framework. However, there appears to be only limited institutional monitoring of the implementation of policies and procedures. There would be benefit in reviewing the terms of reference of the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, the Quality Advancement Committee, the Quality Advancement Unit and the Higher Education Development Centre as it is difficult to reconcile the terms of reference with the precise roles of these agencies.
- Significant progress has been made in recent years in responding to the University's stated commitment to Treaty of Waitangi issues and the University is commended for the ongoing and constructive debate and commitment to the advancement of Treaty and Māori issues.
- The University should review its strategies to address continuing gender imbalances among academic staff and senior managers.

TEACHING QUALITY

- The University intends to develop a generic workload model for academic staff.
- The reported effectiveness of the work of the Higher Education Development Centre is commended. Participation in its courses is voluntary, and there would be benefit in the University identifying professional development workshops/seminars that staff be required to complete at key points in their careers. Casual and sessional teaching staff should be required to participate in appropriate induction, training and support. The University is aware of the need to ensure appropriate induction and support for Heads of Department.
- Student evaluations of teacher performance are not compulsory and remain confidential to the members of staff requesting the evaluation. It is not clear how effective the analysis and interpretation of data is in assisting improvement in teacher performance.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

- The University is commended for the strength of the processes related to the reviews of programmes and Departments. However, these reviews should include benchmarking against national and international departments and programmes which would be consistent with the University's stated commitment to benchmarking.
- Students should receive advice from academics on course and paper selection. The University should standardise the information in paper outlines to meet student needs, to make clear University expectations and to ensure accuracy, consistency and transparency.
- The Information Services Building is an impressive facility which integrates student learning support facilities and the Library with other student facilities and meeting spaces. The University is commended for the level of general learning support for students and the cohesiveness of student services on the Dunedin campus.
- The University is commended for the level of information technology support for students. The high level of service and support provided by Library staff is appreciated by students.
- The University is commended for the proactive nature of the critical incidents guidelines designed to preserve the safety of students in critical incidents.
- The University uses Blackboard as its learning management system. Information Technology Services is responsible for technical support and staff training, and the Higher Education Development Centre is responsible for support and expertise in the pedagogical use of Blackboard and its integration into teaching and learning. However, this division of responsibility and accountability for Blackboard is unclear and should be reviewed.
- Generally, there is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of research student supervision. The University should consider making the training of research supervisors mandatory. The University intends to enhance the support given to research students applying for external scholarships.
- There is a general acceptance of research-informed teaching as a distinctive characteristic of the University, though there is a diversity of views about what this concept means in practice. A University-wide discussion related to the broadening and refining of the understanding of research-informed teaching across the University is currently being undertaken as part of the implementation of the *Strategic direction to 2012*.
- The University has a commitment to promoting and supporting research, teaching and learning in areas relevant to the needs and interests of Pacific Peoples. Appropriate funding and resource support for students and the Pacific Islands Centre will be required and has been secured for the 2007 budget.
- International students appreciate the Kiwi host system in the residential colleges, which the panel commends.
- The University provides grants annually to assist staff in projects that will lead to the internationalisation of the curriculum, but more needs to be done to develop a shared University-wide understanding of the goals and implications of the internationalisation of curriculum.
- The Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences was visited by members of the panel prior to the main Audit Visit to Dunedin. There is a positive collegial feel and evidence of a good working relationship between the School and the local District Health Board and Hospital. The Clinical Schools in Dunedin and at the Northern Campuses at Christchurch and Wellington have strong intellectual links and staff interaction. There is good communication with the overarching Faculty of Medicine. The Deans of the Christchurch and Wellington Schools have responsibility for their campus libraries and computer services rather than being responsible to the University Librarian and Director of Information Technology Services based at Dunedin. Any review of Information

Technology Services should address line responsibilities between Dunedin and the Northern Campuses to ensure the resolution of issues of infrastructure, compatibility and operations.

- The University is commended for the rich and supportive campus life. The University is addressing the issues related to student behaviour, in particular through the development of a Student Code of Conduct.
- The evaluation of papers is not compulsory and the University relies very much on the professional responsibility of staff to ensure evaluations are undertaken. There should be transparent and agreed procedures for the evaluation of all papers on a regular cycle.

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

- The University has an initiative to rationalise institution-wide graduate attributes by taking into consideration both discipline-specific attributes and the value of generic transferable skills.
- The University has a strong, positive and comprehensive policy on assessment practices. There was, however, evidence of a disparity of application of the policy across the University, particularly in the area of feedback on assessment to students.
- Informal benchmarking takes place across the University. However, the University recognises that its benchmarking has not been strategic and it intends to strengthen and support benchmarking at an institutional level. The University should complement institutional benchmarking by monitoring and comparing relevant academic programmes, preferably incorporated into the University's schedule of academic programme reviews.

COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key: C = Commendations R = Recommendations

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

GENERAL

Context

C 1 The University is commended for the present strength of relations between the University community and the senior executive.
[p.2]

C 2 The University is commended for:

- [p.2]
- (i) the strength and depth of relationships and mutual support between the University and the City,
 - (ii) the pride in the University held by the community.

Managing devolution

R 1 *The panel recommends that the University implements strategies to supplement written advice to increase staff and student awareness and understanding of the University's policies, procedures and guidelines that impact on the student learning experience, particularly for students whose culture tends to be more in the oral tradition.*
[p.3]

Planning and monitoring

C 3 The University is commended for the inclusive nature of consultation in determining the *Strategic direction to 2012*, for the current work being undertaken on the strategic imperatives, and for the development and implementation of operational plans.
[p.4]

Quality assurance infrastructure

R 2 *The panel recommends that the University reviews the terms of reference and operations of the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, the Quality Advancement Committee, the Quality Advancement Unit and the Higher Education Development Centre to ensure an appropriate division and allocation of responsibilities for:*
[p.7]

- (i) *the development and determination of University policies and procedures on teaching, learning and assessment that will provide the best quality student learning experience and learning outcomes,*
- (ii) *the operational support and accountability for the implementation of such policies and procedures across the Divisions and Departments,*
- (iii) *the monitoring of the effectiveness across the University of the implementation of such policies and procedures in Divisions and Departments and ensuring reference to those accountabilities in the position profiles and personnel reviews of senior managers.*

Treaty of Waitangi responsiveness

C 4 The University is commended for the progress being made to the commitment to the advancement of Treaty and Māori issues throughout the University.
[p.8]

R 3 *The panel recommends that, as a matter of priority, the University implements the recommendations contained in the Treaty of Waitangi stocktake.*
[p.9]

Equity

R 4 *The panel recommends that the University reviews its strategies to address continuing gender imbalances in appointments and promotions at all levels among academic staff and senior managers across the institution.*
[p.10]

TEACHING QUALITY

Staff workload

R 5 *The panel recommends that the University formally recognises the cultural leadership provided by Māori staff across the University community consistent with its approach to fulfilling Treaty of Waitangi obligations as stated in the University's Charter, and takes this into account in consideration of staff workload and promotion.*
[p.12]

Staff training and development

C 5 The University is commended for the reported effectiveness of the one-to-one consultations to academic staff provided by the Higher Education Development Centre.
[p.12]

R 6 *The panel recommends that the University identifies selected Higher Education Development Centre professional development workshops/seminars that should be required for new staff and/or at key points in the promotions and salary review processes, supported by release time and flexible scheduling as appropriate to enable attendance.*
[p.13]

R 7 *The panel recommends that the University ensures casual and sessional staff University-wide receive appropriate induction, professional development and support for them to be effective, and that induction and training are made mandatory.*
[p.13]

R 8 *The panel recommends that the University, in progressing Improvement Initiative 1 with respect to the induction and support of Heads of Department, requires compulsory participation in leadership development programmes by all new headship appointees.*
[p.14]

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Design and review of programmes

C 6 The University is commended for the strength of the processes related to the reviews of programmes and departments.
[p.16]

Student advice and support

R 9 *The panel recommends that the University develops a University-wide policy of identifying mandatory, recommended and optional components in paper outlines to meet student needs, to make clear University expectations and to ensure accuracy, consistency and transparency.*
[p.17]

R 10 *The panel recommends that the University ensures that enrolment for First Semester does not impinge upon Summer School course work and examination period.*
[p.17]

Student learning support and student services

C 7 The University is commended for the high quality learning environment and easy access to support services provided in the Information Services Building.
[p.18]

C 8 The University is commended for the level of general learning support for students and the cohesiveness of student services on the Dunedin campus.
[p.18]

C 9 The University is commended for the proactive nature of the Critical Incidents Guidelines and their role in preserving the safety of students in critical incidents.
[p.19]

Information Technology Services

C 10 The University is commended for the effective information technology support for students, including the effective work carried out by the 'Yellow Jackets' with students using computer resource rooms.
[p.19]

Postgraduate students

R 11 *The panel recommends that the University considers making the formal training of research supervisors mandatory.*
[p.22]

R 12 *The panel recommends that the University ensures systems are in place to provide research degree students University-wide with minimum levels of organisational and funding support consistent with the University's expectations.*
[p.22]

Internationalisation

C 11 The University is commended for the Kiwi host system in the residential colleges.
[p.25]

The Northern campuses

R 13 *The panel recommends that, in any review of Information Technology Services, the University addresses the line responsibilities between Dunedin and the Northern Campuses to ensure the resolution of issues of infrastructure, capability and operations.*
[p.27]

Student life

C 12 The University is commended for its rich and supportive campus life.
[p.27]

Evaluation of academic programmes and feedback

C 13 The University is commended for the administration and follow-up of student experience and opinion surveys over a number of years.
[p.28]

R 14 *The panel recommends that the University implements transparent and agreed procedures that ensure the evaluation of the delivery of all individual papers on a regular cycle, generally no less than at least once every three years.*
[p.28]

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Benchmarking

R 15 *The panel recommends that, in support of Improvement Initiative 9 with respect to strategic benchmarking activities, the University complements institutional benchmarking by implementing the monitoring and comparison of relevant academic programmes, preferably incorporated into the University's schedule of academic programme reviews.*
[p.31]

1 GENERAL

1.1 CONTEXT

The University of Otago has, for many years, enjoyed a reputation for being a University which attracts students from throughout New Zealand. That this has been the case has arisen, in part, from the University's reputation for high quality education in addition to its offering of academic programmes in medicine and health sciences, and its strong student-centred culture. Generous provision of residential accommodation supplemented by flatting accommodation in and surrounding the University campus has created an identifiable University precinct which has facilitated a lively and distinctive campus life. The University was among the first in New Zealand to establish a unit – at present called the Quality Advancement Unit – and a central committee dedicated to providing support and leadership in quality advancement throughout the institution. The University is well-known for the extent of the surveys it administers on the experience and opinions of students and graduates.

Academic programmes at the University are delivered through four Divisions – the Division of Commerce/School of Business, the Division of Health Sciences, the Division of Humanities, and the Division of Sciences. Each Division is headed by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor, and the structure of each Division is determined by its size and the nature of its disciplines. *Commerce* has seven Departments and a Graduate Programme. *Health Sciences* comprises the Faculty of Dentistry, the Schools of Pharmacy and Physiotherapy, and the Faculty of Medicine. The Faculty of Medicine has four constituent Schools – the Otago School of Medical Sciences, the Dunedin School of Medicine, the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences. These latter two are also known as the 'Northern Campuses'. *Humanities* changed its structure during the time of the audit process and now has twelve Departments and two Centres, two Faculties (Law and Education) and one School – Te Tumu. *Sciences* has twelve Departments and two Schools.

The University is currently planning for the merger of the University with the Dunedin College of Education, which was approved by the Government at the time this report was being written. The merger will bring together two institutions with distinct cultures, and the University is planning to manage the risks that could arise from this by ensuring good communication among those involved in the merger.

Since the beginning of 2004, changes to the senior management team have included a new Vice-Chancellor and new Deputy Vice-Chancellors. The majority of the appointees to these senior management positions were from within the University. They bring both new approaches to strategic processes and the development of research-informed teaching at the University and an intimate understanding of the values that have distinguished the University.

An important exercise in the setting of priorities has been the discussions leading to the approval of the *Strategic direction to 2012* document, and the establishment of working groups to develop objectives and action plans. This has provided opportunities for the involvement of members of the University community and its external constituents. Interviewees from a range of levels throughout the University indicated that communication between senior executives and the University community is effective, with an increasing collegiality and collaboration across the University. It was generally agreed that there is input into policy and operations from below the senior executive level with good connections from the lower levels of the organisation to the

higher levels. There was consistently positive support for the Vice-Chancellor's style of inclusive dialogue and for his initiative in establishing a working group to investigate ways of cutting down unnecessary managerial requirements. The panel applauds these initiatives, though notes that care must be taken that the desire to decrease bureaucracy does not result in the loss of processes necessary for effective academic policy development and practice and effective quality assurance.

COMMENDATION

C 1 The University is commended for the present strength of relations between the University community and the senior executive.

The research and teaching facilities, residential colleges and other student accommodation for the University of Otago dominate the northern part of central Dunedin. The University is the biggest business in Dunedin and contributes significantly to the life of the City. The University does much to develop ongoing relationships with graduates of the University as alumni.

The panel interviewed a small sample of external stakeholders and was told of the greatly enhanced relationships over recent years between the University and its communities of interest. Given the prominence of the Health Sciences, there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the Schools of Medicine and Health Sciences and the local District Health Boards in Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington. The University recognises the importance of maintaining the already established relationships, establishing new linkages where there are mutual benefits, and ensuring the character of student life on campus continues to provide positive benefit to the City.

COMMENDATION

C 2 The University is commended for:

- (i) the strength and depth of relationships and mutual support between the University and the City,**
- (ii) the pride in the University held by the community.**

1.2 MANAGING DEVOLUTION

The University was among the first universities in New Zealand to adopt a devolved structure, whereby decisions about teaching and learning can be more directly related to the needs associated with the range of different disciplines to be found in a comprehensive university.

The self-review portfolio produced by the University of Otago for this audit states that:

The University's mission and goals are pursued through a devolved organisational structure, co-ordinated centrally. Policies are set centrally following consultation, but decision making and budgetary responsibility are devolved to divisions. There is some further devolution to schools and departments, at the discretion of the divisional heads.

From the interviews of staff and students, the panel came to the view that, in general, processes are working effectively in the devolved environment as a result of the strong working relationships among people in key positions. The high level of devolution of policy and the implementation and interpretation of policies and procedures, however, carries the risk of variability in policy interpretation and implementation across Departments. For example, students reported differences across faculties in assessment policy and postgraduate support, policy and implementation. Interviewees indicated a heavy reliance on the class representative

system (through which class representatives act as liaison people, passing students' concerns and feedback to lecturers and Departments), departmental and programme reviews, and various forms of student evaluations to identify issues related to delivery and performance.

There appears to be a need for stronger staff and student awareness and understanding of many key policies and procedures. Existing policies are available in written form and there is an expectation that staff and students will read and understand these policies. Nevertheless, interviewees indicated a variability of interpretation of policies by staff, and limited awareness by students of key policies that impact on their learning. For example, many students did not appear to be aware of the provision of a Mediator and/or Proctor within the University, or of the existence of the *Student charter*. The charter was developed by a working party of the Quality Advancement Committee, which included representation from the Otago University Students' Association and Te Roopu (Māori Students' Association), and sets out the rights and responsibilities of students, and affirms and restates in accessible form the principles behind the existing policies of the University. Although the charter is on the University's current student website, and is published in the *Student handbook diary* distributed to all students, its existence is not necessarily known by students to whom it is addressed.

RECOMMENDATION

R 1 The panel recommends that the University implements strategies to supplement written advice to increase staff and student awareness and understanding of the University's policies, procedures and guidelines that impact on the student learning experience, particularly for students whose culture tends to be more in the oral tradition.

1.3 PLANNING AND MONITORING

The University's planning builds on the University's vision and mission statements in the University's *Charter*.

Vision

- *A research-led University with an international reputation for excellence*

Mission

- *The University of Otago will advance, preserve and promote knowledge, critical thinking and intellectual independence to enhance the understanding, development and well-being of individuals and society. It will achieve this by building on foundations of broad research and teaching capabilities, unique campus learning environments, its nationwide presence and mana, and international links.*

The University has a range of planning documents in support of these statements. Of particular interest to the panel was the *Strategic direction to 2012* which was the subject of wide discussion, led by the new Vice-Chancellor and senior management group. This document is a clearly-stated high-level document with six 'strategic imperatives':

- *achieving research excellence,*
- *achieving excellence in research-informed teaching,*
- *ensuring outstanding campus environments and student experience,*
- *contributing to the national good and to international progress,*

- *ensuring effective external engagement,*
- *building and sustaining capability.*

Following approval of the document in early 2006, six working groups were established, with representation across the University, to develop objectives related to the imperatives and action plans for the implementation of the new strategic direction, as well as indicators and reporting mechanisms. At the time of the Audit Visit, the working groups had just begun their work. Once this work is completed, central, divisional and school/departmental plans – many of which had been developed independently – will be reviewed to ensure they align with the University's strategic direction.

From the interviews, the panel formed the opinion that all sectors of the University had had opportunities to provide input to the deliberations leading to the *Strategic direction to 2012*. The inclusiveness of consultation in the formulation of this document gave those interviewed confidence in the ongoing process that is intended to gain wide ownership through continuing extensive consultation and input. The panel was told that plans at Divisional level were broad in design, with specific detail relating to disciplines intended to be contained in School and Departmental plans. The work arising from the publication of *Strategic direction to 2012*, as outlined above, provides the University with the opportunity to put in place a structured and systematic approach to strategic planning, implementation, monitoring and accountabilities which will help ensure plans are implemented and monitored effectively. The University is committed to implementation of the directions developed by the working groups.

COMMENDATION

C 3 The University is commended for the inclusive nature of consultation in determining the *Strategic direction to 2012*, for the current work being undertaken on the strategic imperatives, and for the development and implementation of operational plans.

The University's *Teaching and learning plan 2005-2010* contains objectives with respect to teaching and learning, aligned to the six dimensions of quality learning at the University:

- *disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and attitudes,*
- *understanding,*
- *research-informed learning,*
- *international perspectives,*
- *ethical and social awareness,*
- *lifelong learning.*

The plan is supported by a document *Implementing the teaching and learning plan 2005* which provides strategies and references under each objective of the plan.

1.4 UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES AND SELF-REVIEW PORTFOLIO

At the time of the development of the six strategic imperatives in *Strategic direction to 2012*, the self-review for this audit was being conducted as a parallel and interacting process. The review process gave rise to fourteen improvement initiatives that are perceived to be specific issues and related actions to be taken which link to the imperatives and themes for improvement. The initiatives have been widely discussed by the working groups specific to the audit and they represent issues that need to be addressed by the University. A major focus of the panel's work

was to review these self-improvement initiatives, to support and/or comment on them, and to make recommendations in areas (including areas relating to improvement initiatives) where future work might be needed in order for the University to move forward in a way that is consistent with its own strategic plan and best practices in higher education.

1.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE INFRASTRUCTURE

The maintenance of standards and the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment have been devolved to Divisions and Departments, and there are advantages of ownership of quality in embedding quality assurance systems throughout the University. However, it is also appropriate for the University as an institution to be able to assure itself that the design and delivery of academic programmes are of high quality consistent with the institutional goals and objectives. The principal academic authority for the University is the Senate; the Senate is advised by a range of committees which also make decisions on its behalf. Several committees of Senate have terms of reference that relate to the maintenance and enhancement of quality in teaching and learning.

The *Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching* supports and promotes excellence in teaching and learning by developing and initiating policies on enhancing teaching, learning and assessment, by proposing guidelines about excellence in teaching, learning and assessment, and by promoting excellence in teaching. The Committee supports innovative developments in teaching, learning and assessment, the internationalisation of programmes and curricula, and the fostering and facilitating of research into teaching. The Committee also has operational activities in its terms of reference. It is required: to disseminate policy and information; to oversee the implementation of policies; to disburse funds through grants for the development of teaching, for innovative teaching and research into teaching; to administer and report on the use of those funds; and to advise on benchmarking standards in teaching, learning and assessment. The Committee is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) and membership includes the Pro-Vice-Chancellors or nominees of all Divisions.

The panel was interested in the inclusion of both policy and operational activities in the terms of reference of the Committee, and understood why members of the Committee interviewed should state that they considered that a policy body such as this was not the appropriate agency to be accountable for the implementation of policies. The Committee has clear expectations of Divisions and Departments, but relies on Divisions and Departments to implement policies and procedures and to monitor their implementation. This raises the question as to the appropriateness of the terms of reference of this Committee, and to the identity of the central agency (committee or individual) bearing formal responsibility for assuring the quality of student learning outcomes across the University against the University's goals and objectives.

From its terms of reference, it would appear that quality assurance is the responsibility of the *Quality Advancement Committee*. This Committee has overall responsibility to report on, and to foster initiatives in, quality advancement throughout the University. It is required: to raise the awareness of the significance of quality processes throughout the University; to oversee all planning documents in relation to the key elements that form part of the University's quality management programme; and to foster networking and benchmarking. The Committee has also been charged with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of quality improvement programmes, and the quality of the outputs of the core activities of the University. As with the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, the Committee is chaired by the

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) and membership includes the Pro-Vice-Chancellors or nominees of all Divisions.

Both of these two central Committees are quite clear as to their expectations of Divisions and Departments, but the extent to which each is involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of policies is not clear. Divisions have *Divisional Boards* which: exercise academic responsibility for courses of study; carry out the appraisal and endorsement of new degrees, programmes and papers; develop policy relating to academic matters; and develop and monitor appropriate quality assurance and quality advancement systems relating to teaching, learning and research.

A structure with devolved responsibilities requires a clear and accountable institutional framework. The five- to seven-year cycle of programmes reviews and student opinion survey data occur after programme delivery. However, there is no apparent ongoing feedback loop to inform ongoing quality during any given year, or during the course of students' degree study, other than evaluations of teachers' performances and of the delivery of papers. The panel appreciated that Divisions and Departments are responsible for high quality delivery of academic programmes, but it had difficulty in identifying which University-wide agent or agencies were accountable for the actual quality of the delivery.

In discussions, the panel was often referred to two agencies in particular as providing support to the work of these committees – the Quality Advancement Unit, and the Higher Education Development Centre. The two agencies were also referred to at times as agencies with responsibilities in implementation and monitoring of implementation. The *Quality Advancement Unit* manages and administers the internal programme and Department review process, the Graduate and Student Opinion Surveys, and the Quality Forum. Given its focus, the Unit is in an ideal position to learn of good practice in teaching and learning as well as to identify good practice in quality assurance and quality improvement processes across the University. The Unit is aware of this, and intends to build on its expertise in this area by establishing a 'best practice database'. **The panel supports this initiative.**

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 2

Development of a best practice database

A best practice database based on the commendations from review reports will be developed to increase the effectiveness of disseminating good practice across the University.

The *Higher Education Development Centre* works in partnership with staff and students to promote, support and enhance knowledge about teaching and learning and the values of higher education. The Centre's main roles are academic and leadership development; the support for the effective use of educational technology by staff; the enhancement of teaching and learning; and the facilitation of flexible delivery to the benefit of students on-campus and at a distance. Therefore, through its workshops and courses, the Centre plays an important role in assisting the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching in the dissemination and the implementation of policies determined by the Senate on the advice of that Committee.

Given the difficulty in reconciling the terms of reference and the precise roles and accountabilities of the two committees and two units discussed above, the panel is of the view that there would be benefit in reviewing their terms of reference.

RECOMMENDATION

R 2 The panel recommends that the University reviews the terms of reference and operations of the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, the Quality Advancement Committee, the Quality Advancement Unit and the Higher Education Development Centre to ensure an appropriate division and allocation of responsibilities for:

- (i) the development and determination of University policies and procedures on teaching, learning and assessment that will provide the best quality student learning experience and learning outcomes,**
- (ii) the operational support and accountability for the implementation of such policies and procedures across the Divisions and Departments,**
- (iii) the monitoring of the effectiveness across the University of the implementation of such policies and procedures in Divisions and Departments and ensuring reference to those accountabilities in the position profiles and personnel reviews of senior managers.**

Two other Senate committees have responsibilities for academic programmes. The *Board of Undergraduate Studies* advises on entry to the University, Foundation Studies, admission and re-admission of students to undergraduate courses, and new undergraduate proposals. The Board monitors changes to first degree regulations. The *Board of Graduate Studies* advises on policy and procedures for higher degrees, the design and introduction of new courses and subjects, major revisions of existing courses and subjects, matters relevant to admission, assessment and examination, the award of scholarships, and matters pertaining to academic standards of graduate programmes.

1.6 TREATY OF WAITANGI RESPONSIVENESS

The University's self-review portfolio notes that:

Within the context of tertiary education, the Treaty of Waitangi highlights the need for equal opportunities for access and participation for Māori staff and students, the protection and sharing of Māori culture within education, and partnership in the governance of the institution.

The University's *Profile 2006-2008* includes the following objectives with respect to the Treaty of Waitangi.

- *To develop and maintain policies and practices which acknowledge partnership with iwi.*
- *To strengthen links with ngā iwi Māori in research and to promote and support research in Māori language, culture, education, science, health and history.*
- *To increase Māori student recruitment, retention and achievement at all levels and to provide appropriate academic, cultural and social support.*
- *To support the recruitment and development of Māori staff.*

The University has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the representatives of tangata whenua, Ngāi Tahu, and enters into Treaty-based relationships and agreements with other iwi as appropriate. The University has a Memorandum of Understanding with Ngāti Porou Hauora, and at the time of the writing of the self-review portfolio, was looking to sign a Memorandum

with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. The Vice-Chancellor is advised by the Kaitohutohu Kaupapa Māori (Māori Affairs Advisor). Council has a Treaty of Waitangi Committee – comprising the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, a member appointed by the Council, and three members on the nomination of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu – to recognise the principle of partnership in the Treaty, to advise the University on matters of kawa and tikanga and to facilitate and advance the relationship in areas of common interest between Ngāi Tahu and the University.

Interviews indicated to the panel that significant progress had been made on recommendations contained both in the *Treaty of Waitangi review of the University of Otago* prepared by Professor Ranginui Walker in 1998 [the Walker Report] and in the academic audit of 2000. Treaty issues were being confronted and discussed. Te Huka Mātauraka (Māori Centre) provides tutorial, pastoral, social and cultural support to Māori students. The University's Māori language policy encourages an understanding and appreciation of te reo Māori. In common with some other educational institutions, the University's vision statement contained in its Māori language policy – *that te reo Māori becomes an ordinary, useful, relevant, vibrant and inspiring language as a medium of communication in a wide range of contexts* – is some considerable way off realisation.

Māori Liaison staff engage with potential Māori students who may wish to obtain higher education. A Working Party on Treaty Education has been established to look at professional development opportunities in te reo me ngā tikanga for academic and general staff. Department and Divisional scholarships, orientations and mentoring programmes are available for students. Te Tumu (School of Maori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies), while an academic School, also plays a role in the support and guidance of staff and students.

COMMENDATION

C 4 The University is commended for the progress being made to the commitment to the advancement of Treaty and Māori issues throughout the University.

The panel was given the *Treaty of Waitangi stocktake* prepared for the University in September 2005 by Kia Māia Bicultural Communications. The stocktake focused on key initiatives and programmes developed and implemented over the past five years, and was intended to serve as a key foundation for the development of strategic documents to lead the University forward. The document summarises the University's Treaty expectations, University initiatives, the steady progress being made on the recommendations of the 1998 Walker Report, and the measure of progress against other tertiary education institutions. The stocktake ends with recommendations structured according to the University's own six Treaty expectations.

The University has accepted the findings in the stocktake report that considered there was no formal strategy for Māori development for students and staff, and that there was a need for strong accountable leadership. A *Māori strategic framework* is being developed to support Māori student and staff recruitment, retention, participation and achievement, and the alignment of resources appropriate to support those goals. The panel was told of the importance of buy-in into the stocktake recommendations which would require real discussions by Departments and Divisions, by Pākehā as well as Māori, all of whom, ultimately, will be responsible for the implementation of strategies arising from the consideration of recommendations.

The University has responded to the call for effective upwards communication processes to capture successes at the grassroots levels across the institution by taking an initiative which **the panel supports**.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 5

Celebrating success in supporting Māori students

The University will foster activities that celebrate and publicise support for Māori students at all levels, in order to develop better methods of engagement with Māori students and examples of best practice.

An issue identified in the stocktake was one that also surfaced during interviews – namely, the relationship between Te Huka Mātauraka (Māori Centre) and Te Tumu (School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies) remains unresolved. The respective roles and responsibilities of these two units and their staff have an impact on both Māori staff and students. Resolving the issues will put the University in a better position to achieve the objectives in its *Profile 2006-2008*. The need to address these important issues must be recognised by the senior executive team with the mana to be proactive in achieving an acceptable resolution.

RECOMMENDATION

R 3 The panel recommends that, as a matter of priority, the University implements the recommendations contained in the *Treaty of Waitangi stocktake*.

1.7 EQUITY

Divisions and Departments have a major responsibility to translate equity principles and goals into practice. The panel read the latest equity plan – *Management plan: equal educational opportunities* – which comprised a policy statement and a number of specific actions that ‘outline the framework for future change’. The plan was approved by the University’s Senate twelve years ago, in 1994, and the timeframe for all but three of the eleven actions was defined as ‘ongoing’.

Clearly this plan is now well overdue for review and the panel was assured by the recently-appointed Professional Development and Equity Manager that this is to be done. The University has stated that it would like to see more women in higher levels of academic leadership and senior executive roles, and has established a Women and Leadership Programme designed to help develop the leadership potential of all women. There is also a mentoring programme for academic staff women to help the increasing number of women in leadership roles; this programme is part of the Women’s Professional Development Programme.

The panel noted, however, that there appeared to be a lack of progress in promoting and recognising women in academic and other senior leadership roles across the University. Student choices and the teaching and learning process can be positively influenced by the presence of women and culturally diverse academic teachers, researchers and senior staff and academic managers generally.

The University supplied the panel with promotions data by gender for the years 2004 to 2006. The promotions for those years do not demonstrate progress on this issue and suggest that proportionally fewer women are seeking consideration for promotion in comparison to men. Unless female staff at the University are genuinely less qualified than its male staff, the professional and leadership development programmes for women staff will not have been effective.

RECOMMENDATION

- R 4 The panel recommends that the University review its strategies to address continuing gender imbalances in appointments and promotions at all levels among academic staff and senior managers across the institution.**

2

TEACHING QUALITY

2.1 OBJECTIVES

The University's *Charter* states:

The University of Otago fosters learning through research-informed teaching that meets international standards. To achieve this, it draws on the expertise and dedication of its staff, and the excellence of its support services.

The University's *Profile 2006-2008* contains the following objectives with respect to teaching quality.

- *To recognise, support and achieve excellence in teaching.*
- *To recognise, reinforce and promote interdependence between research, teaching and professional practice.*
- *To provide an environment that supports the academic, professional, creative and career development of staff.*
- *To provide staff with opportunities to interact in an international environment.*
- *To maintain and strengthen commitment to Equal Employment Opportunities.*
- *To support the recruitment and development of Māori staff.*
- *To support the recruitment and development of Pacific Peoples' staff.*

2.2 STAFF WORKLOAD

The University encourages Departments to have workload models, based on University-wide principles, designed to ensure staff have a workload balanced between teaching, research and other administrative, clinical, consultation and community service duties as appropriate. The University is also looking to develop a generic model to assist Departments.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 7

Development of generic workload models

The University will work with Divisions to develop generic workload models appropriate to the disciplines in each Division. From this a number of examples of best practice will be developed to assist departments with the implementation of models appropriate to their discipline.

The panel supports this approach, especially if it recognises the need to help protect the time for research as well as teaching for staff who have particular responsibilities to the wider University community, to professional bodies, and to the communities in which they live – such as Māori and Pacific Island staff, and staff in professional disciplines. The panel was made aware, for example, of the greater calls on Māori academic staff to provide cultural and pastoral support throughout the University community in addition to meeting University expectations of advancing Māori issues through the membership of committees and boards. Roles associated with assisting the University to meet its Treaty of Waitangi obligations are in addition to

expectations in research and teaching and could reasonably be expected to constitute a formal element in the allocation of staff workloads.

RECOMMENDATION

R 5 The panel recommends that the University formally recognises the cultural leadership provided by Māori staff across the University community consistent with its approach to fulfilling Treaty of Waitangi obligations as stated in the University's Charter, and takes this into account in consideration of staff workload and promotion.

2.3 STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The primary agency for academic staff training and development is the Higher Education Development Centre which provides a wide range of opportunities for academic staff. The Higher Education Development Centre is an academic department that provides a range of services to the University. The Centre is involved in the Leadership Development Programme, Women and Leadership Programme, academic women mentoring, and administers and teaches in the Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in Tertiary Teaching. The Centre also provides support for professional development through the Medical Education Group on the Northern Campuses at the Schools of Medicine and Health Sciences in Wellington and Christchurch, and is aware of the need to ensure staff in the Northern Campuses are not disadvantaged by geographical distance from Dunedin.

The Centre gives particular attention to the needs of new academic staff by providing resources available electronically, running induction courses and introductory courses. Mentoring support is also available for new staff on the 'confirmation' track. It provides one-to-one consultancy work for academic staff, and the panel was told that the Centre's individualised support for staff, especially in innovative teaching methods, was particularly useful. It was clear to the panel from the comments of many of those interviewed that the Centre's support that focused on the particular needs of individual staff was highly valued.

COMMENDATION

C 5 The University is commended for the reported effectiveness of the one-to-one consultations to academic staff provided by the Higher Education Development Centre.

Apart from the induction courses for new staff, attendance at the Centre's activities is voluntary. The Centre responds to the needs of staff and staff participate in programmes because they want to, not because they have to. The panel noted declining participation in some courses and programmes offered by the Centre and was interested in what the reasons might be why some core categories of the Centre's training programmes are not compulsory. The Centre could, for example, be a major source of expertise for developing understandings across the disciplines of the University regarding the meaning and implementation of research-informed teaching and learning.

Staff of the Centre expressed the view to the panel that there is a need to encourage academic staff to link their research interests to their own teaching practice, and to heighten their curiosity about teaching and learning. The Centre is a rich source of professional development for all academic staff. However, the panel was told of varying departmental support for staff to attend the Centre's courses.

The panel concurs with the concerns expressed by some of those interviewed that the present voluntary policy regarding professional development could have a detrimental effect on the quality of teaching and learning if staff do not participate.

RECOMMENDATION

R 6 The panel recommends that the University identifies selected Higher Education Development Centre professional development workshops/seminars that should be required for new staff and/or at key points in the promotions and salary review processes, supported by release time and flexible scheduling as appropriate to enable attendance.

The panel was told of the need for stronger cultural competency awareness training of general and academic staff. This is relevant to the University's achieving its internationalisation goals. In addition, to better meet Treaty obligations, there is a need to increase competency in tikanga Māori, and to resolve the sources of training and advice provided to staff.

The work of casual and sessional teaching staff is vital, providing important learning support for students. The panel sought information on the training of these staff and understands that training is not mandatory, that it is a departmental responsibility, and that there are disparate practices in different areas of the University, with some departments requiring tutors to attend Higher Education Development Centre courses. Some students remarked that they felt disadvantaged by having a non-academic tutor rather than an academic as their teacher. Given the priority placed by the University on research-informed teaching, the University should ensure casual and sessional teachers, and non-research teaching staff, are well-integrated and inducted into the aims and styles of this mode of teaching. The panel is of the view that tutors should be required to participate in properly designed and delivered training and staff development programmes so that they are competent and have the confidence, knowledge and skills to be effective in what they do.

RECOMMENDATION

R 7 The panel recommends that the University ensures casual and sessional staff University-wide receive appropriate induction, professional development and support for them to be effective, and that induction and training are made mandatory.

Key to the success in the implementation of policies and procedures is the professionalism of Heads of Department. The University is aware of the need to ensure proper preparation and support for Heads of Departments and has an initiative to address this issue.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 1

Induction and Support of Heads of Department

The University will review how the new Heads of Departments are inducted into their new roles and will develop appropriate resources, such as a Heads of Departments handbook, to support them.

The appointment of Heads of Department in today's complex higher education environment requires a rigorous selection process and leadership development. While the panel was made aware of the opportunities for participation in the various activities associated with the Leadership Development Programme offered by the Higher Education Development Centre, it formed the view from interviews that the take-up of these opportunities was not optimal, and that the timing was not always particularly convenient for individuals. The panel was told by the

University that changes to the Leadership Development Programme activities have already been made.

RECOMMENDATION

R 8 The panel recommends that the University, in progressing Improvement Initiative 1 with respect to the induction and support of Heads of Department, requires compulsory participation in leadership development programmes by all new headship appointees.

2.4 EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS

The University recognises the value of student perceptions of teaching, and staff are strongly advised to gain student feedback on their teaching. If student evaluations of teachers are sought, the Higher Education Development Centre can customise the questionnaires to assist teachers to receive feedback on aspects of particular interest besides a core of five compulsory questions. Student evaluations of teaching are not compulsory. However, they are required for promotion, confirmation reports and other appraisals of academic staff performance, and a high proportion of staff seek evaluations. Peer review is another, voluntary, method of evaluating teachers' performance. The panel was unclear how effective the analysis and interpretation of the data were for assisting the improvement of teaching, but notes the Higher Education Development Centre mentoring as well as the Centre's encouragement of, and assistance with, teaching portfolios.

Students interviewed by the panel often did not know that student evaluations of teachers are intended for quality enhancement. Only some of the students interviewed received feedback describing the use that had been made of information gathered the previous year to assist teachers to improve. Most students said that if they had known this, they would have taken the evaluations more seriously. The panel also understands that the teacher evaluations can remain confidential to the member of staff, and the panel questions the justification of there being no requirement that the evaluations must be made available to the Head of Department who is responsible for the quality of the performance of teachers in the discipline.

3

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

3.1 OBJECTIVES

The University's *Charter* states:

The University of Otago fosters learning through research-informed teaching that meets international standards. To achieve this, it draws on the expertise and dedication of its staff, and the excellence of its support services.

The University's *Profile 2006-2008* contains the following objectives with respect to programme delivery.

- *To achieve target outputs for student enrolments and performance.*
- *To develop lifelong learning skills and foster intellectual independence in students.*
- *To develop in students the skills, attributes and knowledge to enhance their capacity to make a positive contribution to society and their employment prospects.*
- *To support internationalisation and student priority interaction in an international environment.*
- *To maintain and strengthen commitment to Equal Educational Opportunities.*
- *To increase the participation and achievement of disabled students at all levels, and to provide appropriate academic and social support.*
- *To preserve and enhance the unique qualities of the Otago campus lifestyle and Otago learning experience.*
- *To increase Māori student recruitment, retention and achievement at all levels and to provide appropriate academic, cultural and social support.*
- *To increase Pacific student recruitment, retention and achievement at all levels and to provide appropriate academic, cultural and social support.*

3.2 DESIGN AND REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

As with other New Zealand universities, the process leading to the approval of proposals for new academic programmes and papers follows the requirements of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee's Committee on University Academic Programmes. Proposals must include the justification for the programme, student workload and assessment, the graduate profile, library resources, timetabling and workload implications, and departmental and Divisional support structures. Key University committees in the approval process are the Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Board of Graduate Studies who ensure proposals forwarded by Divisional Boards (after due consideration by them) are properly considered in a University-wide context before proceeding to the Senate.

The Library is formally involved in an assessment of resources as part of the process for the approval of new academic programmes. The panel noted, however, that there was no provision in the process for Information Technology Services to comment formally on the impact on the

provision of information technology resources. This was confirmed by Information Technology Services. It is the view of the panel that this omission from the process should be reconsidered by the University, given the heavy reliance on information technology in the delivery of academic programmes, and the need for the University to ensure requirements can be met.

As is the case in many universities in New Zealand, the University administers a five- to seven-year rolling programme of formal evaluations of academic Departments and academic programmes, and administrative reviews of non-academic operational areas. It was clear from interviews that reviews are regarded by the University community as important quality assurance tools. The rolling nature of the programme of reviews allows for flexibility as well as long-term planning by units to be reviewed. All reviews require self-reviews based on the agreed terms of reference. Convenors and secretaries to the panels receive support through training and a handbook. The post-review requirements are thorough, and status reports are required at agreed intervals until every recommendation has been satisfactorily addressed. The self-review portfolio reports that the reviews have identified and rectified a number of issues relating to the workload of students, assessment, qualifications and professional training of staff, and research culture.

COMMENDATION

C 6 The University is commended for the strength of the processes related to the reviews of programmes and departments.

The panel noted that the reviews do not at present formally require benchmarking. The fact that panels include at least one external member who is a national or international expert in the area should facilitate access to national or international expertise. The University has informed the panel that it is aiming to work with units to undertake benchmarking after a review to provide a means of implementing recommendations and overcoming issues. It is the view of the University that benchmarking should take place after a review has recommended courses of action. However, the panel believes that establishing benchmarking as a requirement in these reviews would be consistent with the University's stated commitment to benchmarking and could better inform review recommendations. (See also section 4.5 of this report.)

The University is required to respond to review requirements set by external agencies – in particular, the Graduating Year Review reported to the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee's Committee on University Academic Programmes for new programmes that have produced their first graduates, and accreditation reviews by professional associations and registration bodies. **The panel supports** the University's initiatives to integrate external and internal reviews.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 8

Integrate Graduating Year Reviews into the University's review processes

Currently, the Graduating Year Review process is not integrated with the University's programme reviews. There is scope to integrate the processes more closely.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 10

Integrate external accreditation and internal review processes more closely

The Quality Advancement Unit is currently working with departments that undergo external accreditation to consider ways of integrating the process more closely with the University's internal review processes in order to avoid duplication of work and to streamline the process.

3.3 STUDENT ADVICE AND SUPPORT

An important element in ensuring a rewarding academic experience for students while at the University is the provision of accurate and relevant academic advice. Such advice should be provided by staff – preferably academic staff – who have knowledge of the academic programme(s) and discipline(s). The University appears to regard student advice as primarily operational, but the panel is of the view that good academic course advice is necessary early in their programmes to assist students make informed choices. The panel was told by some students of occasions when this was not available resulting in student learning and career advancement setbacks arising from misinformation on course regulations and prerequisite requirements, particularly for those involved in more complicated programmes of study such as double degrees. Good early advice is more likely to lead to student success which will assist the University in the retention of students. The University has advised the panel that a research project on student advising carried out by staff of the Higher Education Development Centre in 2005 has been discussed by members of senior management and the issues are currently being considered.

The panel came to the view that the nature of the information provided on paper outlines varied across the University. There appear to be instances where students would appreciate more detail in paper outlines about choices, and the panel is of the view that the University should standardise the paper outline components across the University and include students in the discussions on this to ensure their needs are met more satisfactorily.

RECOMMENDATION

R 9 The panel recommends that the University develops a University-wide policy of identifying mandatory, recommended and optional components in paper outlines to meet student needs, to make clear University expectations and to ensure accuracy, consistency and transparency.

Summer School was introduced by the University in response to student demand, and comprises credit as well as non-credit papers. Departments are responsible for the management of Summer School papers and adequate levels of service. The Summer School Office ensures support and guidelines for participating Departments and for students. The Summer School begins in January and the panel was told that examinations for Summer School overlapped enrolment for First Semester. This is undesirable, and was of concern to some of the staff and students interviewed. The University has told the panel that the issue was given consideration, but considers the solutions used at other universities were not acceptable to the University of Otago. The panel nevertheless considers that this is an important issue that requires satisfactory resolution.

RECOMMENDATION

R 10 The panel recommends that the University ensures that enrolment for First Semester does not impinge upon Summer School course work and examination period.

3.4 STUDENT LEARNING SUPPORT AND STUDENT SERVICES

The Student Learning Centre was established in 1999 as part of the Higher Education Development Centre. It is strategically located in the Information Services Building which also includes the Central Library and Careers Advisory Services as well as some Higher Education Development Centre staff. The panel held a whole morning of interviews in the Information

Services Building and was able to make a brief inspection of the facilities. The panel was impressed with the manner in which student learning support facilities and the Library had been integrated with other student services and facilities, meeting spaces and food court.

COMMENDATION

C 7 The University is commended for the high quality learning environment and easy access to support services provided in the Information Services Building.

The Student Learning Centre offers workshops in academic skills, on-line support, a student mentoring scheme, 'Scarfie Friends', and one-to-one assistance. The University measures the effectiveness through surveys of the residential colleges, Student Support Services and the University Information Centre as well as the more comprehensive University-wide Student Opinion Survey.

In interviews, the panel was told by students that services are well advertised, and that the assistance at residential colleges was appreciated. The panel came to the view that the work of Centre staff and other support services is relevant and effective in meeting the needs of students and is valued by them.

Student Services includes the Recreation Services, Careers Advisory Service, Disability Information and Support, Student Health Services and the Chaplaincy. It has oversight of Te Huka Mātauraka (Māori Centre) and Pacific Islands Centre. The various sections have strong networks in place, and seek student opinion through surveys. They benchmark against other comparable services elsewhere to ensure their services are relevant.

COMMENDATION

C 8 The University is commended for the level of general learning support for students and the cohesiveness of student services on the Dunedin campus.

Supplementary first-year tutorials to students are held in residential colleges with tutors appointed generally on the advice of the Departments that offer the courses. The tutorials are welcomed by students and appear to be effective. For students not living in residential colleges, the Otago University Students' Association has established 'ScarfieCol', a virtual college. The University and the Otago University Students' Association sponsor 'scarfie.com', an information service to all students via a fortnightly student e-newsletter, to provide information on student life and campus activities.

The panel was told that while the job description for the Director of Student Services is for all campuses, resources are solely for the Dunedin campus. The panel was told that at each of the Northern Campuses in Wellington and Christchurch, the student body determines the services they will pay for. Student Services was aware of the need to carry out a review of student services on Northern Campuses to address service issues which have been notified to them.

Te Huka Mātauraka offers support for academic, cultural and social needs from pre-enrolment through to graduation, providing liaison services, tutorials, mentoring, study skills and peer study groups. Surveys indicate that students are very satisfied with the support they receive. This support for students is supplemented by Māori support at Divisional level with student support officers and networks of kinds best suited to the needs of the students.

Support for students with impairments is offered through Disability Information and Support Services, providing electronic scanning of learning materials, interpreting, tutoring, readers and writers. The University has an informal 'disABILITY Group' of staff and students to provide an

advocacy role. As with support for Māori and Pacific Island peoples, the Disability programme is funded largely by government Special Supplementary Grants.

The panel was told of students reporting difficulties and delays in getting appointments with health counsellors. The University is aware of the pressure on Health Services staff, and the need to address the current level of Health and Counselling staff.

The University recognises the importance of risk management generally, and a new system to ensure legislative compliance across the University's activities was being developed at the time of the writing of the self-review portfolio. In the area of student services, the panel was interested in the Critical Incidents Guidelines which had been prepared to assist Heads of Divisions, Departments and Schools and residential colleges in the management of critical incidents affecting students. The panel was given examples of the implementation of the Guidelines in practice which had clearly been effective in achieving their purpose.

COMMENDATION

C 9 The University is commended for the proactive nature of the Critical Incidents Guidelines and their role in preserving the safety of students in critical incidents.

3.5 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Information Technology Services (ITS) is responsible for providing, maintaining and supporting information and communication technologies throughout the University. ITS supports students through such facilities as computer clinics, resource rooms, e-mail, hire equipment, NetStorage, and the student network service. The HelpDesk is a first point of contact for staff and students for advice. As well, there is a team of student assistants – Yellow Jackets – who are trained tutor-supervisors working in resource rooms to assist with any hardware, software or general enquiries. The work of the Yellow Jackets is appreciated by students.

COMMENDATION

C 10 The University is commended for the effective information technology support for students, including the effective work carried out by the 'Yellow Jackets' with students using computer resource rooms.

The University faces challenges with the employment of up to 80 non-ITS support staff dispersed across Divisions and Departments around the institution. The Information Technology Services is the core University information technology enterprise system, while the departmental information technology personnel are involved mostly in support of teaching and learning. The University is aware that, at times, there can be some disconnection between Information Technology Services and departmental information technology people.

The Schools of Medicine and Health Sciences at the Northern Campuses at Wellington and Christchurch have their own Computer Services whose Managers report to their respective Deans as heads of the Clinical Schools on those campuses. Therefore all matters of planning and operations are directed through the Dean as there is no direct reporting link between the Schools and the Information Technology Services. There are, of course, informal operational links, but the panel was told of issues of compatibility and access at the Christchurch campus. (This is discussed in more detail in section 3.13 below.)

3.6 THE LIBRARY

The Library is the key access point for information resources in support of current and anticipated teaching and learning. It provides information literacy skills programmes and is integral to the effective study, teaching and learning.

The Library employs student assistants and their composition reflects the diversity of student backgrounds in the University. Students interviewed told the panel that Library staff were approachable, knowledgeable and helpful. This positive response was also evident from student opinion surveys made available to the panel.

As in all other New Zealand universities, the Library has strong benchmarking and networking with other university libraries, especially those in Australasia.

The Library collections in Dunedin are in six main localities - Central, Hocken, Medical, Dentistry, Law and Science. The Medical Libraries attached to the Schools of Medicine and Health Sciences at the Northern Campuses at Wellington and Christchurch, however, are part of the Schools, and the Librarians report to their respective Deans who head the Clinical Schools on those campuses, and not to the Dunedin-based University Librarian. This appears to work satisfactorily because of the strong operational links with the University Library network.

The Library has on-line access to resources via its web pages, and the collections and on-line access is supplemented by services such as Document Delivery and Remote Services. The comprehensive electronic service is an important tool for students involved in distance learning. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Library relies heavily on information technology. There is a close working relationship between the Library and the Information Technology Services which is strong at the moment because of the present incumbent Librarian and Information Technology Services Director. At an operational level, the close working relationship is demonstrated most publicly by the joint Library/Information Technology Services 'HelpDesk' just inside the western entrance to the Library in the Information Services Building, and staffed by people from both units.

The panel was told that the Library is being reviewed, while the Information Technology Services is yet to be reviewed. It is to be hoped that the latter review will follow on quickly after that of the Library so that planning and developments in areas in which both units are involved can benefit.

3.7 ON-LINE LEARNING

As with other universities in New Zealand, the University has adopted a flexible approach to the delivery of its courses, to meet the needs of students to the extent that disciplines allow. The University has recognised the need to look carefully at distance learning to determine how it fits into the *Strategic direction to 2012*.

Distance learning and distance-taught papers are integrated into Departments which are responsible for the quality of distance education materials. The panel was told that the quality of materials used on-line and in distance learning was the responsibility of Departments, and there was no central monitoring or scrutiny of the quality of such materials.

E-learning at the University is defined as any learning that is supported by, or mediated by, or involves the use of, some form of electronic information communication technology. Blackboard is the University's learning management system, allowing web-based access to course materials, tests, announcements and staff information. The advantage of a system such as

this is the 24-hour student access to materials. Library electronic resources can be accessed through Blackboard as well as the Library's web pages. Students interviewed told the panel of the variable use made of Blackboard by staff, the differing levels of staff confidence and competence, and the range of uses that students would want staff to employ.

The Higher Education Development Centre has an Educational Media section which assists in the integration of technology into teaching and learning across the University, assisting staff, providing digital media and web applications, assessing media and web materials for educational use, and generally contributing to the University's strategy and policy development in this area. The training in skills necessary for using Blackboard, however, is undertaken by Information Technology Services. Information Technology Services employs an E-learning Support Specialist to provide support and advice on a one-to-one basis for teaching and support staff involved in using Blackboard. Information Technology Services co-ordinates and assists in all aspects related to the operation of Blackboard, including overseeing software upgrades, and resolves issues relating to problems occurring with the use of Blackboard.

Thus while Information Technology Services is responsible for technical support and trains staff in improving the use made of Blackboard, the support and expertise in the pedagogical use of Blackboard and its integration into teaching and learning rest with the Higher Education Development Centre. Some staff indicated to the panel that there were concerns that this division of responsibility did not appear to be working as well as it might. The lines of responsibility and accountability need to be reviewed by the University to ensure that there are clear understandings about what aspects and responsibilities are technical, operational or pedagogical.

3.8 POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

From interviews with postgraduate students, the panel came to the view that, generally, there is a high level of satisfaction with both the quality of supervision and the accessibility of supervisors. The self-review portfolio identifies the importance the University gives to quality supervision. In particular, it sets down its expectations with respect to supervision and the proactive approach to raising the profile of supervision amongst academic staff through the introduction of training sessions and the production of a brochure to highlight key aspects of quality supervision. The University relies on the progress reporting system to identify difficulties and problems, at which stage issues are addressed as promptly as possible. The University also monitors the supervisory and learning experience of postgraduate students through the Graduate and Student Opinion Survey data made available to academic departments and the Research Higher Degrees Office.

The panel supports the University's intention to mentor junior supervisors.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 1 1

Formalisation of mentoring for junior supervisors

The formalisation of a mandatory mentoring scheme for junior supervisors.

The University is aware, however, that some primary supervisors were classified as research inactive, and has an initiative to address this which **the panel supports**.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 6

Ensuring primary supervisors are research active

The University will introduce a mechanism for ensuring that only research active staff are primary supervisors

The panel understands that the training workshop for supervisors of graduate research students is optional, and believes that the University should consider making this mandatory recognising that new supervisors in particular require formal preparation in policy and procedures, and even experienced postgraduate supervisors who are new to the University will benefit from knowledge of specific expectations.

RECOMMENDATION

R 11 The panel recommends that the University considers making the formal training of research supervisors mandatory.

The Research Higher Degrees and Scholarships Office is responsible for the administration of PhD programmes, scholarships, strategic and policy advice to the University and support for research-only students. The Director of the Office makes decisions on behalf of the PhD Academic Committee with respect to admissions and examinations, and chairs the Graduate Research Student Liaison Committee. The University has a PhD reporting system designed to record honest dialogue among students, supervisors and Departments, and to assist in goal-setting and self-review of progress by candidates.

The panel supports the University's intention to improve its reporting and confirmation process.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 12

Review the PhD progress reporting system and confirmation process

Review and benchmark the current PhD progress reporting system and PhD Confirmation processes. The aims of this exercise will be:

- *to streamline the reporting system based on best practice at other institutions,*
- *to develop a criterion-based system of confirmation within University-wide generic model of criteria which can be adapted as appropriate within departments.*

There appears to be significant variability among Departments with respect to space, facilities and resource provision for students, resulting in variability of student experience. Data show a growth in PhD numbers, and it will be important for the University to plan to cope adequately with anticipated growth, particularly in meeting minimum resource requirements and provision of quality supervision.

RECOMMENDATION

R 12 The panel recommends that the University ensures systems are in place to provide research degree students University-wide with minimum levels of organisational and funding support consistent with the University's expectations.

Students' participation in induction programmes appears to vary, although the University indicated that induction programmes and University-wide seminars are provided for all research degree students upon enrolment.

Some students interviewed felt isolated and would welcome more University-wide interactions. The University is aware of this and there are University-wide initiatives to facilitate research student interactions. The panel was told of an initiative to create an on-line facility for postgraduate student interactions, and the panel supports this.

The University offers a significant number of scholarships and awards for undergraduate and postgraduate students, and **the panel supports** the University's intention to do more in this regard.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 13

Support more students to be awarded top external scholarships

The University will initiate a more co-ordinated effort to assist top students to find external sources of funding, such as the Top Achiever Scholarships. This will be achieved by contacting students and their supervisors directly to make them more aware of these opportunities and holding workshops to assist students in preparing their applications for such funding.

3.9 RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS

Strategic direction to 2012 presents a 'working definition' of research-informed teaching as encompassing:

teaching undertaken for the most part by active researchers, and which is closely informed by current research knowledge and scholarship.

The self-review portfolio uses the discipline scores from the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) evaluations in three ways to support its approach to research-informed teaching. A comparison of discipline PBRF scores with good teaching scale results from the Student Opinion Surveys supports the view that Departments that are strong in research are perceived to have good teaching; 50 percent of PhD completions over the last five years were from Departments within the top 15 out of 46 units assessed; and nearly three-quarters of PhD students have A and B ranked staff as primary supervisors.

The University encourages the inclusion of current research and research activities in undergraduate as well as postgraduate teaching. The Pro-Vice-Chancellors reported to the panel that no one is allowed to lecture without a research degree and record of publications, but accept that in some professional areas, it is inappropriate to employ only those with PhD degrees, and professional practitioners are often required in those areas. From interviews, the panel came to the view that there was a general acceptance of research-informed teaching as a distinctive characteristic of the University, but that there was a variety of views on the concept, some regarding it as teaching growing out of the personal research of staff, and others as reflective teaching through which students are shown that research is important.

The fact that an academic is an active researcher does not necessarily mean that his or her teaching is either informed by research or effective in facilitating student learning. Research-informed teaching can also refer to teaching processes – as opposed to the disciplinary content that is delivered – that are researched and empirically informed. From reading the self-review portfolio and interviews, the panel came to the view that University staff understanding of issues related to teaching were more concerned with issues of pedagogy and practice. There is a great deal of research, experience and good practice within the University that could be drawn upon to make some of the University's key planning goals and claims more meaningful in relation to classroom practice, on-line education and the student experience.

The panel noted in interviews with academic staff that there was little if any mention of the impact of research on teaching or the impact of research on assessment, although the panel was aware of the encouragement given to these issues by the Higher Education Development Centre. There is a reliance on Departments to ensure the research-teaching nexus is effective. It was not clear to the panel if students have an understanding of the concepts and values underlying the research-informed teaching culture attested by the University. Reviews of Departments and academic programmes are used as an instrument to check that research-informed teaching does occur in appropriate ways. The panel is of the view that there could be a benefit in greater institutional discussion on the University's particular approach to research-informed teaching, ensuring that the understanding is around curiosity-driven teaching and learning, pedagogical practice and student engagement and is not restricted to teaching by those active in research in their discipline.

At the time of the Audit Visit, the panel was of the view that the University should develop an ongoing shared University-wide discussion to assist in broadening and refining staff and student understanding of research-informed teaching. Since the Audit Visit, the panel has been told that this issue has been discussed by the *Strategic direction to 2012* working group on research-informed teaching, and a paper on research-informed teaching and the research-teaching nexus will form the basis of further University-wide discussions. The panel supports this reported development.

3.10 PACIFIC ISLAND STUDENTS

The University's *Profile 2006-2008* contains the following objectives with respect to the Pacific peoples.

- *To promote and support research, teaching and learning in areas relevant to the needs and interests of Pacific Peoples.*

The University is developing relationships with Pacific communities, and is supporting the recruitment of students and staff while assisting students to undertake and successfully complete studies. The University also promotes research and teaching in areas of relevance to the Pacific Islands, and develops and sustains co-operative relationships with appropriate research and teaching institutions in the Pacific region.

The Pacific Islands Centre offers students a range of support activities, with tutoring and a Mentoring Support Programme, as well as cultural and pastoral support. There is a Postgraduate Reference Group, established to provide support through seminars at which students present papers on their research. A Pacific Peoples Reference Group involves Pacific Island people external to the University, and assists in the provision of services for Pacific Island students beyond the limit of present resources funded mostly by the government's Special Supplementary Grant. The panel was told how the Pacific Island staff in Te Tumu and the Pacific Islands Centre go beyond the call of duty in supporting Pacific Island students – there is just one staff member of the Pacific Islands Centre – and how the work of the Centre has resulted in the greater retention of Pacific Island students.

At the time of the Audit Visit, the panel was of the view that the University should review the funding and resources for Pacific Island student support and monitors the workload of the staff at the Pacific Islands Centre to ensure there are adequate resources for the University to meet its commitment to the peoples of the Pacific Islands. Since the Audit Visit, the panel has been told that the issue has been considered and appropriate funding has been secured, including the

appointment of additional staff to support Pacific Islands students. The panel supports this reported development.

3.11 INTERNATIONALISATION

Internationalisation at the University is defined as the conscious, institutional embodiment of the varied international dimensions of research, teaching, learning and service activities of the University's staff, students and related communities. The University has an *Internationalisation management plan 2003-2006* and encourages an array of research and teaching linkages and collaborations, student exchange schemes and international students to Otago. The Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching provides grants annually to assist staff in projects that will lead to the internationalisation of the curriculum. The panel applauds this move, but while projects are useful incentives, they do not necessarily translate into systematic institutional commitment to implementing a goal. From interviews, the panel came to the view that the understanding of internationalisation of the curriculum across the University was inconsistent, and that the University should do more to develop a shared understanding.

At the time of the Audit Visit, the panel was of the view that the University should develop a shared University-wide understanding of the goals and implications of the internationalisation of curriculum. Since the Audit Visit, the panel has been told that the *Strategic direction to 2012* working group on research-informed teaching had considered the issue and major changes have been proposed to the University's concept of internationalisation of the curriculum and to the manner in which internationalisation contributes to excellence in enhancing the research-teaching link. The panel supports the progress on this issue.

The panel was told by international students of the good effort being made to assist them to adapt to, and flourish in, the University. However, the panel was not clear as to whether there was any systematic monitoring of international students for academic progress and academic outcomes. Many international students find the academic learning culture within the University very different from their previous learning experiences. Comment was made on the need to learn to accept the lifestyle of many domestic students, and the need for them to work hard to become integrated within the Departments. To this end, the students appreciated the Kiwi host system in the residential colleges.

COMMENDATION

C 11 The University is commended for the Kiwi host system in the residential colleges.

3.12 PLAGIARISM

The panel discussed the issue of plagiarism with staff and students and noted variability of departmental responses to first offending by students. The University has a policy on plagiarism, provides information to students at enrolment, in course outlines and the *Study guide*, and has prepared a booklet on 'referencing' based on the guide. The Higher Education Development Centre holds seminars for staff and students as part of a strategy to promote an understanding of plagiarism. The need to develop appropriate strategies to address plagiarism is an issue for all universities, and there are issues arising from differing understandings as to what is understood in New Zealand as plagiarism. Given different cultural understandings of what constitutes academic honesty and integrity, the panel is of the view that the University needs to continue to take an educative approach to dealing with the issue, emphasising good scholarly practice, and

punishment only when it is clearly justified by demonstrable student awareness of these conventions.

3.13 THE NORTHERN CAMPUSES

The University has three Schools of Medicine and Health Sciences – in Dunedin, and in the Northern Campuses of Christchurch and Wellington. Prior to the Audit Visit by the whole panel to Dunedin, two members of the panel and the Director of the Unit made a half-day visit to the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, as one example of the Northern Campuses. A diversity of staff, students and stakeholders were interviewed during the visit.

Overall, there was a collegial feel about the School and the panel was told of the strong intellectual links and staff interaction among all three Clinical Schools. The collegiality of the Schools and the connections made between research and practice that are fundamental to clinical work facilitate curriculum development. The formal assessment at the end of the fifth year medical programme involves an examination common to all three Schools, set and marked by one School each year on rotation. There was evidence of a strong relationship between the School and the local District Health Board and Hospital, built to a large extent on staff commitment and goodwill, particularly through the teaching undertaken by Hospital staff.

There is good communication across the University and good sharing within the overarching Faculty of Medicine. There can, at times, be a loss of ‘engagement’ with the University because of the lack of personal contact, although there is access to the Dunedin-based Higher Education Development Centre courses and personnel for staff development support. The opportunities to provide input into University planning was acknowledged, although there was an appreciation that Dunedin is perceived as having the main input into planning given the comprehensiveness of that University campus.

Although medical students in their third year in Dunedin are prepared for the move to clinical schools and the Christchurch School provides orientation, all students – international students in particular – are affected by the move from Dunedin to the School, requiring adjustments to more practically-focused teaching and learning. For international students, communication is often an issue, and there are processes in place to attend to this with good mechanisms to recognise problems being faced by students. The panel was told that work has been done to improve and sharpen assessment practices so that they are more clearly expressed and understood, to the benefit of all students.

As already noted in this report, the Librarian and Manager of Computer Services in Christchurch are responsible to the Dean of the School, although there are informal ‘direct lines’ between the School Librarian and the University Librarian and staff in Dunedin, and between the Christchurch Computer Services and the Information Technology Services in Dunedin. The panel was told of information technology issues of infrastructure, compatibility and operations for the Christchurch campus. For example, it appears there have been problems arising from planning and upgrading of computer systems based in Dunedin being undertaken without consulting Christchurch, which have required Christchurch to find solutions to effect networking with the new systems. The panel was told that this has impacted on access for students and staff arising from compatibility problems, particularly for those wanting to log-on from off-site.

RECOMMENDATION

R 13 The panel recommends that, in any review of Information Technology Services, the University addresses the line responsibilities between Dunedin and the Northern Campuses to ensure the resolution of issues of infrastructure, capability and operations.

3.14 STUDENT LIFE

The University of Otago is justifiably proud of its support for a student experience centred around a lively and distinctive campus life. Important to this environment is the residential accommodation and extensive flatting around the campus in the North Dunedin area. The panel was told that 83 percent of student enrolments come from outside of Dunedin city, and interviews with students confirmed that many students come to Dunedin attracted by the whole package of academic quality and campus life.

COMMENDATION

C 12 The University is commended for its rich and supportive campus life.

The panel was made aware in interviews of the issues surrounding a reported high level of alcohol consumption by some students and associated problem behaviour. While this is not unique to Dunedin or the University of Otago, comments by students expressed concerns that drinking was an expected part of the campus experience. The panel talked to a range of students, domestic and international, some of whom felt intimidated by the drinking culture but said that they had to learn to accept it, if not be part of it. Some students interviewed recognised the need for there to be a more responsible attitude to alcohol use, expressing the view that their time spent at the University should, first and foremost, be within a learning environment. The panel was told of the concerns of the University, the Otago University Students' Association and the North Dunedin citizens who were being proactive in addressing the issue. The panel supports the University's attempts to begin addressing issues of alcohol-related unacceptable student behaviour through the proactive work of the North Dunedin Working Party, Student Association initiatives and activities, the work of a Drug and Alcohol Specialist in Student Health Services and the development of a Student Code of Conduct. The panel is also of the view that the University should expand and enhance initiatives and activities towards advocating the responsible use of alcohol, drawing on appropriate expertise.

3.15 EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES AND FEEDBACK

The core instrument used to gather student and graduate opinion on academic programmes is the Course Experience Questionnaire; postgraduate respondents answer further items on postgraduate supervision and support. These surveys are administered by the Quality Advancement Unit. Information gained from the surveys is presented in appropriate form to Deans, Heads of Department and programme administrators, with collations of departmental/course-based reports being sent to the Pro-Vice-Chancellors. Results on University services are sent to relevant service units. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) and the Manager of the Quality Advancement Unit meet with departmental staff to discuss the results of surveys.

COMMENDATION

C 13 The University is commended for the administration and follow-up of student experience and opinion surveys over a number of years.

Data gathering of this nature has been undertaken for just over a decade, and the University is conscious of the rich source of information on student learning experiences now available which should be better used to inform the University in its quality enhancement activities. Work is underway to compare the established literature that has been developed around measures of student opinion and satisfaction with the University's own findings on student engagement that can be drawn from its data.

The University is aware of the need to improve feedback to students on the use made of their input to the process, and recognises the value in less formal and formative methods of evaluation.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 3

More effective use of data from the Student Opinion and Graduate Opinion Surveys

The University will develop a mechanism to ensure that the information from the Student Opinion Survey and Graduate Opinion Survey is used to effect improvements across the University. The improvements can then be communicated back to students.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 4

Foster less formal and formative methods of evaluating courses

The University will foster and support methods of evaluating courses which are easier to integrate and which provide more immediate feedback to both academic staff and students. Examples of best practice will be identified and disseminated.

The panel supports these initiatives.

The Higher Education Development Centre administers the surveys of individual courses and papers. The Centre also encourages teachers to use whatever means of evaluation best meets the needs of the course.

The panel understands that the evaluation of papers is not compulsory and the University relies very much on the professional responsibility of staff. Information available to the panel suggested that there was an over-reliance on teacher evaluation – complicated by being voluntary as well – as opposed to the proactive evaluation of teaching quality and programme delivery. The panel was told that it is possible for a paper to be taught without being evaluated (even through student satisfaction measures) if those teaching the paper are not applying for promotion and choose not to undertake any evaluation of the paper. All papers should be evaluated on a regular cycle through some chosen mechanisms, and this form of evaluation should be distinct from the evaluation of a particular lecturer's teaching performance, and should not be reliant on staff appraisal processes that might require evaluations of papers to be undertaken in support of staff performance.

RECOMMENDATION

R 14 The panel recommends that the University implements transparent and agreed procedures that ensure the evaluation of the delivery of all individual papers on a regular cycle, generally no less than at least once every three years.

4

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

4.1 OBJECTIVES

The University's *Charter* states:

[The University of] *Otago focuses on developing the attributes of all students in the following key areas:*

<i>Communication</i>	<i>Critical thinking</i>	<i>Cultural understanding</i>
<i>Ethics</i>	<i>Global perspective</i>	<i>In-depth knowledge</i>
<i>Information literacy</i>	<i>Interdisciplinary perspective</i>	<i>Lifelong learning</i>
<i>Research</i>	<i>Scholarship</i>	<i>Self-motivation</i>
<i>Team work</i>		

The University's *Profile 2006-2008* contains the following objectives with respect to the achievement of learning outcomes.

- *To develop in students knowledge to enhance their capacity to make a positive contribution to society and their employment prospects.*
- *To increase Māori student recruitment, retention and achievement at all levels.*
- *To increase Pacific student recruitment, retention and achievement at all levels.*
- *To achieve target outputs of student enrolments and performance.*
- *To develop lifelong skills and foster intellectual independence in students.*

4.2 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

As stated in the *Charter* (see above), the University has developed a statement of attributes of a University of Otago graduate. Proposals for new programmes and papers are expected to describe the learning outcomes which are linked to the graduate attributes; the Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Board of Graduate Studies look closely at these. The Graduate Opinion Survey asks graduates to identify the extent to which they developed the specific attributes during their courses of study.

The panel was not clear as to how teaching strategies relate to the attainment of graduate attributes. It is noted that the University has an initiative to rationalise the institution-wide graduate attributes.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 14

Rationalisation of the graduate attributes

The University will consider a rationalisation of the current Graduate Attributes to take into consideration the role of discipline specific attributes, as well as the concept and value of transferable skills.

4.3 LEARNING OUTCOMES

The University requires clearly-defined learning outcomes for each paper and monitors their appropriateness through student surveys. The panel was told of the development of a new policy document on academic progress, and it applauds this initiative. The panel understands, however, that the identification of at-risk students will not happen until the beginning of year 2, and could not find any explicit reference to student learning support, or clear rationale for a two-year suspension. The panel is of the view that any implementation of a policy on academic progress needs to be supported by the development of a learning support plan to cope with the learning needs of students at risk of failure. The panel has been told by the University that it is intended that each student will be provided with learning support by the Designated Advisors of Studies.

4.4 ASSESSMENT

The University has a strong, positive and comprehensive *Senate policy on assessment of student performance: principles and guidelines*, adopted in 1997 and revised in 2005. The document contains four principles, discusses twelve specific policy uses, and provides case studies, a marking sheet template, advice with respect to examination instructions and administration, dishonest practice information, and a comprehensive set of guidelines.

The University's policy, principles and guidelines on assessment are of high quality. Nevertheless, the panel was told of some disparities in the student academic experience, and was given examples of little or no feedback received on assessment, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level. This raises, again, the general issue discussed in section 1.5 'Quality assurance infrastructure' and addressed in recommendation R 2, surrounding the extent and means of promulgation of policies, the oversight of their implementation, and the accountability of academic staff who are responsible for implementing them and for ensuring they contribute to student learning.

4.5 BENCHMARKING

The University has both a contestable fund to support benchmarking projects and a guide on how to plan and implement such a project. The University recognises the informal benchmarking that arises from ongoing academic activity and interactions that are part of academic life, providing academics with access to fresh ideas, to ideas for improvement, and to comparisons of performance and academic standards. Mention was made to the panel of meetings of senior managers with those from other universities and the sharing of data and statistics in a number of areas. The examples of benchmarking projects referred to in the self-review portfolio are focused on the particular needs of specific Departments – such as admission interview processes, and the assessment of research.

At institutional level, the University is a member of the Association of Commonwealth Universities' University Management Benchmarking Club which has benchmarked (for example) aspects of management, planning, leadership, governance, and the student experience.

The University acknowledges that its benchmarking has not been strategic, and it is looking to identify appropriate institutions for this purpose.

UNIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE 9

Undertake strategic benchmarking activities

The University will identify a small number of comparable institutions internationally with whom benchmarking activities could be undertaken. Specific areas and processes to be benchmarked could be identified through the use of review reports. Resources will be made available as appropriate.

While at an institutional level there was an understanding of the extent of data collection that is taking place, there appeared to be less awareness of the potential use of these data for quality assurance purposes. In particular, there is considerable collection of data relating to teaching and learning at an institutional level which could be benchmarked with data from other universities. Such activities would be an important outcome of a more systematic monitoring of performance across the institution. Further, it will be important for the University to select specific overseas disciplinary programmes as well as some higher education institutions as reference points for benchmarking.

RECOMMENDATION

R 15 The panel recommends that, in support of Improvement Initiative 9 with respect to strategic benchmarking activities, the University complements institutional benchmarking by implementing the monitoring and comparison of relevant academic programmes, preferably incorporated into the University's schedule of academic programme reviews.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The panel thanks Professor David Skegg, Vice-Chancellor, and Professor Gareth Jones, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International), for support of the audit process, and for the University's warm welcome to the audit panel. The panel also thanks Sarah Carr, Manager, Quality Advancement Unit, as well as those who contributed to the University's self-review and compilation of the self-review portfolio and the organisation associated with the Audit Visit. The panel is grateful for the openness and frankness of those who gave of their time to appear before the panel.

AUDIT PANEL

Chair of the Panel

Professor Ken Milne, Dean of the Graduate Research School, Massey University

New Zealand academic member of the Panel

Professor Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education (Research), College of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

Non-academic New Zealand member of the Panel

Carolynn Bull, Barrister, Christchurch

Overseas members of the Panel

Professor Penny Boumelha, Jury Professor of English Language and Literature, University of Adelaide

Professor John Dearn, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic), University of Canberra

In attendance:

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

APPENDIX 1

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

The University of Otago was founded in 1869 and opened in 1871, teaching Classics, English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Mental and Moral Philosophy. Natural Science, Law, Medicine and Mining soon followed. Dentistry was introduced in 1907 followed by Home Science (now Consumer and Applied Sciences), Accountancy and Commerce subjects and Theology. Physical Education was added in 1947. An affiliated college of the University of New Zealand from 1874 until 1961, the University of Otago has, since autonomy in 1962, broadened its range of courses and in 2006 teaches a wide range of courses and undergraduate and postgraduate academic programmes in a variety of disciplines.

The delivery of programmes is administered by four Divisions:

- Division of Commerce/School of Business,
- Division of Health Sciences,
- Division of Humanities,
- Division of Sciences.

The University is also planning for the merger of the University with the Dunedin College of Education.

The University's main campus is in Dunedin which includes the Dunedin School of Medicine. Campuses in Wellington and Christchurch are homes to the Christchurch and Wellington Schools of Medicine and Health Sciences; and there is a small campus in Auckland.

STUDENTS <i>Equivalent Full Time Students</i>		STAFF <i>Equivalent Full Time Staff</i>	
<i>Domestic</i>	15,635	<i>Academic and research staff</i>	1,048
<i>International</i>	2,104	<i>Research only staff</i>	571
<i>Total</i>	17,739	<i>Support staff</i>	1,688
		<i>Total</i>	3,307
<i>Māori students</i>	1,329		
<i>Pacific students</i>	537		
<i>Percentage of total EFT Students enrolled in postgraduate programmes</i>			18.6
<i>Percentage of total EFT Students enrolled in postgraduate research degrees</i>			6.6

Sources: 2006 academic audit portfolio, Annual report 2005.

APPENDIX 2

NEW ZEALAND UNIVERSITIES ACADEMIC AUDIT UNIT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To consider and review the universities' mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the ongoing academic quality of academic programmes, their delivery and their learning outcomes, and the extent to which the universities are achieving their stated aims and objectives in these areas.
- To comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities are applied effectively.
- To comment on the extent to which procedures in place in individual universities reflect good practice in maintaining quality.
- To identify and commend to universities national and international good practice in regard to academic quality assurance and quality enhancement.
- To assist the university sector to improve its educational quality.
- To advise the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee on quality assurance matters.
- To carry out such contract work as is compatible with its audit role.

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

VISION

- To have contributed to the achievement of quality, quality enhancement and excellence in New Zealand universities as measured by the improved quality of their scholarly activities and outcomes – namely, research, teaching, learning and community service provided by their graduates and staff to the measurable benefit of people and societies both inside and outside of New Zealand.

OBJECTIVE WITH RESPECT TO ACADEMIC AUDITS CONDUCTED DURING THE PERIOD 2003-2006

- To have successfully administered audits of all New Zealand universities and to have produced audit reports which are acknowledged as being authoritative, rigorous, fair and perceptive and which are acknowledged by the universities as being of assistance to them in improving their own programmes of continuous improvement of quality and added value.

APPENDIX 3

CYCLE 3 FOCUS

GENERAL

With respect to teaching quality, programme delivery, and the achievement of learning outcomes, how does the institution ensure:

- the effective involvement of students, staff and other communities of interest in the review and improvement of plans, strategies, regulations, policies and guidelines?
- the effective implementation of institutional, college, division, Faculty and School plans, strategies, regulations, policies and guidelines?
- the taking into account of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi?
- appropriate lines of responsibility and allocation of resources to planning and monitoring?

TEACHING QUALITY

Assignment of staff

How does the institution ensure:

- the most appropriate and effective assignment of staff to teaching in programmes at various levels?
- the appropriate balance of staff time in teaching, research, administration, consulting and community activities?

Development of teaching competence

How does the institution ensure:

- effective development of individual teachers through activities that characterise, recognise, enhance and reward teaching quality?
- effective support for staff to review teaching practices and to develop appropriate skills and expertise and to explore and apply a range of flexible and innovative learning methodologies including e-learning?

Evaluation of teaching

How does the institution ensure:

- effective evaluation of the quality of teaching?
- the appropriate support and advice for those (both students and staff) involved in the evaluation of the quality of teaching?

Feedback

How does the institution ensure:

- effective feedback to teachers and students?
- effective application of feedback into the enhancement of teaching?

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Context

How does the institution ensure:

- effective understanding by staff of regulations, policies and guidelines related to teaching, assessment and workload?
- effective understanding by students of course and assessment requirements, learning opportunities, study skills support and access to facilities and resources?

Design

How does the institution ensure:

- effective design of the teaching of courses to use ways most appropriate for the discipline, levels of courses, learning outcomes, student preparation and student learning styles?
- effective use of an appropriate range of teaching methods that incorporate flexible and innovative learning methodologies including e-learning?
- effective realisation of links between research and teaching?
- effective provision and use of facilities and services in support of student learning?

Evaluation

How does the institution ensure:

- effective evaluation of the quality of the learning environment?
- the most appropriate support and advice for those involved in the evaluation of the quality of the learning environment?

Feedback

How does the institution ensure:

- effective feedback to teachers and students?
- effective application of feedback into the enhancement of the learning environment?

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

How does the institution ensure:

- the alignment of learning outcomes in programmes and courses with the institution's goals and objectives for teaching and learning?
- the application of appropriate and effective assessment practices in testing the achievement of learning outcomes?
- the excellence of scholarly standards of achievement?
- effective benchmarking of standards nationally and internationally?