



Academic Audit Cycle 5

Mid-cycle Report
July 2020

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University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Recommendation R1

Reference: AQA Report page 8; Guideline Statement GS 1.2

The Panel recommends that the University consider whether the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching is giving full effect to its strategic role and contribution, including implementation and monitoring of progress of strategic direction and initiatives.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

The Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT) has shown some movement since mid-2017 in becoming more strategic in direction and initiatives and less of being a passive vehicle for reports or a reactive committee for events presented to it. But it has more work to do to embed strategy. The University's Support Service Review (SSR) has also affected CALT's Information Technology Advisory Group (ITAC) and the CALT/ITAC subcommittee on Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching (TELT) with effect from mid-2018. ITAC has been dis-established and TELT has been subsumed into the ITS Governance Board – however, the re-establishment of TELT is under investigation.

Reporting against each revised Terms of Reference:

- *To develop new strategies directed at contemporary topics in teaching and learning, primarily through the establishment of thematic subcommittees and working groups.*
These have been established intermittently such as for the computer-based examinations piloted in 2017/18, reported to CALT in January 2019 and at a University-wide forum in mid-2019, which was invaluable when online examinations were required, due to COVID-19, at the end of semester two, 2020. Furthermore, in May 2020 CALT set up a Working Party to frame how the University would investigate lessons learned from its rapid shift to online teaching, learning and assessment.
- *To initiate, create and advance policies and guidelines on teaching, learning, assessment, and evaluation.*
This has not occurred other than via a second semester 2019 Working Party on Lecture Recordings (chaired by the Student representative) which could lead to a revision of the Recording of Lectures and other Teaching Activities Policy. Much of this type of work is done by the Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUGS) and Board of Graduate Studies (BoGS), and for evaluations by the Quality Advancement Unit. BUGS and BoGS have indicated that the Guidelines for the Assessment of Student Performance are in need of revision – and this may be done by CALT. The University's policies and guidelines are refreshed on a regular cycle under the auspices of the Policy Management Group with appropriate consultation. The University already has a comprehensive suite of teaching etc policies and guidelines and rather than initiate and create new ones, the role of CALT should be directed at “advancing” them, i.e. ensuring the policies are widely understood and adhered to, as well as identifying ones in need of a refresh and leading that process.

- To recognise, support and promote excellence and innovative developments in teaching and learning, and the effective use of information and communication technologies.*
 The first part is achieved through #6 (annual Otago Teaching Excellence Awards/selection for national awards) & #7 (awarding of grants to foster and facilitate research and scholarship into teaching and learning). The second part is achieved through #10 (act upon regular reports from Information Technology Services) and could be achieved if TELT was re-established.
- To work with University bodies and external agencies to disseminate information on innovative practice in teaching, learning and assessment, including the Internationalisation Committee.*
 The first part always occurs through the University body of the Higher Education Development Centre (HEDC), the Office of the Director of Distance Learning and the College of Education's Centre for Distance Education and Learning (CDELTA). Many examples of this occurred during semester one 2020 in response to enforced online teaching delivery and student learning due to COVID-19. Those groups disseminate to external agencies via mediums such as publications, presentations at in-person or virtual conferences and participation in Ako Aotearoa Forums. For the second part, the Director International is a member of CALT and provides a conduit to/from the Internationalisation Committee – that conduit could be strengthened in terms of information flow.
- To administer, evaluate and award the annual Otago Teaching Excellence Awards and to select nominees for the national awards.*
 The chronological separation of the local and national awards that commenced in 2017 continues to be successful, allowing staff to be nominated nationally following the local Otago Teaching Awards. The local awards each year comprise up to three in the general category and up to one Kaupapa Māori award, with decisions made in late January by a sub-committee of CALT. Advice in crafting the applications (selected from the last 2-3 years of local awards) for the National Awards is provided by HEDC and previous national winners. National Awards: in 2017 Otago gained 3 of the 12 national awards; in 2018 we gained 4 of the 10 awards (including the Kaupapa Māori award, the Pacific Island endorsement award and the Prime Minister's Supreme Award), and in 2019 we gained one of the 10 awards.
- To foster and facilitate research and scholarship into university teaching and learning, including disbursing, administering, and reporting on University funds.*
 The selection of applications for one-year University Teaching Development (UTD) grants by the grant evaluation panel has continued since 2017 as a melding of selected members of CALT and selected members of the Otago Research Committee and chaired by the DVC – Research & Enterprise, so that the process replicates the requirements for Otago Research grants. The possibility of transferring applications between UTD and University of Otago Research Grants (UORGs) is under discussion as is the transfer of UORG funds to UTD to permit research on the COVID-19 disruptions to teaching, learning and assessment.

The administration aspects are now performed by the Executive Assistant for the DVC(Academic). Reporting outcomes of the UTD grants have been formalised by the full report of each grant being included in the CALT Agenda with opportunity to discuss and identify how the research can inform enhanced practice University-wide. A snapshot (summary) of each grant is placed on the CALT website to disseminate the findings to the

University community. To encourage timely completion of grants an interim report is required at 6 months by the DVC(Academic).

The grants for the 2019 round were advertised in a general category (planning, implementing and evaluation of curriculum intervention; or incorporating the use of e-technology in teaching and learning), as strategic projects (recommendations, affirmations and enhancements identified in AQA Cycle 5 audit and the criteria for the upcoming Cycle 6 audit), as strategic projects that relate to teaching and learning which fall within the University's Maori Strategic Framework, Pacific Strategic Framework and Sustainability Strategic Framework, and for projects that promote the Three Rs (Refinement, Reduction & Replacement) in the use of animals for teaching methods.

- *To encourage applications for externally funded grants for the development and support of excellence in teaching and learning.*
This is a focus that requires impetus.
- *To serve as an Advisory Group to the Higher Education Development Centre.*
This Advisory role needs to be enacted and the specifics identified as to the advice required from CALT for HEDC given that HEDC is an autonomous academic department with a Head of Department.
- *To discuss and, where appropriate, act upon regular reports from the Higher Education Development Centre and Information Technology Services.*
Regular informative reports are received three times a year from HEDC and from Information Technology Services, noting there are six meetings per year of CALT.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

Revised Terms of Reference for the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT) were formally approved by Senate in October 2016, following discussion at the CALT meeting in September. The aim of the new terms of reference is to move CALT from its perceived reactive role to one where it is strategically influencing teaching and learning at the University.

Revised CALT Terms of Reference

- To develop new strategies directed at contemporary topics in teaching and learning, primarily through the establishment of thematic subcommittees and working groups.
- To initiate, create and advance policies and guidelines on teaching, learning, assessment, and evaluation.
- To recognise, support and promote excellence and innovative developments in teaching and learning, and the effective use of information and communication technologies.
- To work with University bodies and external agencies to disseminate information on innovative practice in teaching, learning and assessment, including the Internationalisation Committee.
- To administer, evaluate and award the annual Otago Teaching Excellence Awards and to select nominees for the national awards.

- To foster and facilitate research and scholarship into university teaching and learning, including disbursing, administering, and reporting on University funds.
- To encourage applications for externally funded grants for the development and support of excellence in teaching and learning.
- To serve as an Advisory Group to the Higher Education Development Centre.
- To discuss and, where appropriate, act upon regular reports from the Higher Education Development Centre and Information Technology Services.

As well as much stronger strategic statements about innovation and technology, the revised terms of reference separate internationalisation, while keeping the *Director International* on the Committee as a conduit to the Internationalisation Committee. This is to ensure that, while that committee leads strategic developments relating to internationalisation, the two Senate committees operate complementarily.

Several outcomes have arisen in response to the new terms of reference, noting that the first was already in process before they were changed. These are

- The creation of a Working Group to investigate and pilot computer-based examinations, recognizing that NCEA is evolving towards the use of such assessment tools and the University will need to follow suit. Under the convenorship of a Socrates member, Associate Professor Selene Mize, the Working Group is moving toward the planned pilot. Student members of the Working Group have urged careful planning to ensure no students are disadvantaged. The Working Group reports to CALT regularly.
- An ITAC/CALT Working Group to consider the use of technology in teaching and learning. The Working Group is composed of members of the Vice-Chancellor's Information Technology Advisory Group (ITAC) and CALT and has been constituted under the convenorship of Dr Ben Daniel Motidyang, an expert in big data in teaching and learning and education technology. The proposal to create the Working Group was prompted by Otago's participation in the Acode Benchmarks for Technology Enhanced Learning Inter-Institutional Benchmarking Summit in 2016 and the Ministry of Education's document [E-learning provision, participation and performance](#). The Working Group reports quarterly.
- Formalising the trial arrangement of a more research-related structure for CALT's annual University Teaching Development (UTD) Grants, whereby the application process replicates the requirements of that for Otago Research grants, with its strategic focus on research. The UTD Grants evaluation panel is comprised of members from CALT and the Otago Research Committee.
- While not a new subcommittee, the annual processes for University Teaching Excellence Awards and nominees for the annual Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards evolve each year. We have been remarkably successful over several years, with 29 awards overall and 7 Prime Minister's Supreme Awards – the most of any tertiary institution in the country. The chronological separation of the local and national awards has been successful, allowing staff to be nominated nationally following the Otago Teaching Awards, and since 2017 has been accepted formally.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Recommendation R2

Reference: AQA Report page 19-20; Guideline Statement GS 2.3

The Panel recommends that the University progress its intentions to review course advice as a matter of urgency.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

As a result of the recommendations of the Support Services Review Business Case a new service, Student Development, was created, which has responsibility for a key component of course advising across the University. Student Development is part of Student Experience within the Shared Services Division reporting to the Chief Operating Officer. The Student Development team is now fully resourced and delivering proactive advice based on requests from departments/units within the university, alongside reactive advice (following appointment or drop-in requests from students). There is further development to be completed in this space, including confirming where delivery of advice for postgraduate students' best sits.

The Student Advising Working Group (SAWG) is the successor group to the Course Advising Group. SAWG is reviewing the Student Advising Policy, and this review will be completed within the 2020 academic year. As part of this policy review, there has been a heavy focus on improving language and broader communication content. SAWG is also reviewing the questions asked at enrolment, based on feedback from Student Development, about the usefulness of the data collected. The work of SAWG regarding eVision enhancements is discussed in the response to [Enhancement E4](#).

Conversations between Student Development and the Office of Student Success continue, particularly around the academic progress warning process following reports run by Student Administration at the end of semester one. Student Development also liaises with the Career Development Centre regarding appointment systems and the Career Readiness Survey (CRS) and how some of the content from a CRS model has been shown internationally to support course advice discussions.

There are a number of projects running in parallel to the above work around specific topics, such as transfer credit, course advice for double degree students, and course advice associated with change of course requests. Student Experience are taking a lead in these discussions, as part of progress against the Shared Services strategic action plan, item 28, 'Embed Student Experience Future State'.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

A subgroup of the University's Admissions, Advising and Approval Working Group reported on Course Advising in a July 2016 report. The report endorsed an iterative and ongoing approach to improving course advising at the University, with course advising opportunities being clearly available to students when they needed them. While this approach emphasises student agency, there is recognition that a proactive approach to advising new students is necessary to ensure such students receive appropriate early advice and are aware of, and comfortable using, the University's course advising services. Some particular student groups were also noted as potentially requiring more direct University-driven advice.

The report made 20 recommendations, the first being that the University establish an ongoing Course Advising Group to oversee and direct course advising activities. This Group was set up in October 2016 and a plan of action was established after consideration of the further 19 recommendations in the subgroup report. The plan prioritised three key strands of work:

1. *To develop processes to ensure that all first-year students are directly contacted and provided with course advice and/or made aware of further course advising opportunities.* Functionality is being developed in the University's Student Management System to seek first year student feedback at enrolment on the level of advice they have received and their comfort with course choices in light of such advice. This will allow identification of priority student groups and pro-active follow up of those who have not received sufficient advice and/or who have requested further assistance (e.g. via telephone). Lower priority groups can also be contacted (e.g. via email) with reminders about the availability and importance of course advice.

The Course Advising Group recognised that a wider group of staff than formal course advisers have a role in advising new students, but that these staff need to know to direct students to more specialised course advice when required. To support this interaction, a guide for student advisers is in development that encourages referral to the University's formal course advising services and staff as appropriate, as well as providing information and contacts for the University's range of student support services. Text for this guide is close to completion and it is planned that the final document will be available by the end of 2017. The final draft of the guide, amended with respect to its 'look and feel' from an earlier draft seen by the Course Advising Group, is due to be scrutinized by the Group at its meeting in early December. It will then go on the Web and a refined printed copy will be made available – particularly to Residential College staff to begin with. The Course Advising Group is also considering whether the role of these non-specialist advisers should be formalised in some way, to assist with outlining responsibilities.

2. *To consider, develop and formalise advising strategies for other key student groups.* The Course Advising Group has considered a number of groups for whom University-initiated course advice might be recommended. Key groups identified and prioritised are:
 - Double degree students – the use of targeted notifications is being investigated. These will be automated in the University's Student Management System and will strongly recommend course advice for double degree students, directing these students to appropriate areas and/or staff. If successful, this functionality may be able to be extended to other student groups.

- Students receiving transfer credit – additional messaging encouraging course advice will be added to notification messages for such students.
- Students on, or at risk of, Conditional Enrolment due to poor academic performance – existing messages to such students have been reviewed and updated, and additional intervention strategies are being piloted (see the response to [Recommendation R4](#)).
- Students with excessive course changes – strategies and supporting systems will be considered further as part of a University project to integrate change-of-course functionality better into the Student Management System.

3. *To review and improve the language used in communicated course advising opportunities and benefits to students.*

The 2016 report found that language used in communicating course advising opportunities could be improved to be more student focused. A working group has been established from the Course Advising Group and, as of August 2017, course advising language in the Guide to Enrolment has been reviewed and revised to focus more on student concerns and text on the University website is also under review. With the involvement of a dedicated group considering language around course advice, new materials and communications benefit from more consistent language and messaging.

In 2018 the Course Advising Group will look to evaluate approaches used in the main 2018 enrolment period, including new initiatives outlined above. The Group also aims to continue with iterative improvements as recommended in the 2016 report.

The Business Case presented as part of the University's Support Services Review makes a number of recommendations in relation to course advising, including the introduction of a dedicated student development service which would be intended to provide course and general advice to students and to refer students to other services as appropriate. It is likely that implementation of the recommendations of the Support Services Review will thus impact on the University's approach to course advising and may introduce opportunities for an enhanced approach.

The work of the Course Advising Group regarding eVision is discussed in the response to [Enhancement E4](#).

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Recommendation R3

Reference: AQA Report page 22-23; Guideline Statement GS 3.1

The Panel recommends that that the University should address progress on its Māori Strategic Framework further and that it should consider how Māori knowledge and pedagogy can be incorporated into curricula.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

Māori knowledge and pedagogy in curricula

The Office of Māori Development continues to work with Māori academic staff, through Poutama Ara Rau, to incorporate appropriate Māori knowledge and pedagogy into papers offered at Otago. Poutama Ara Rau's common research project is dedicated to considering "How can mātauranga Māori and Māori pedagogies transform tertiary teaching and learning?" A multidisciplinary team of nine Principal Investigators have been established to lead three research programmes within Poutama Ara Rau on: Curriculum, Leadership, and Innovation.

Associate Deans (Māori) have been appointed in each of the academic divisions and schools to facilitate the translation of research into the teaching and research cultures of the academic disciplines. The Associate Deans (Māori) meet regularly with the Director, Office of Māori Development to ensure timely and effective communication occurs between the academic divisions and the Office of Māori Development. Examples of relevant outcomes within the academic divisions include:

- A project to quantify the student profile to establish best practice models of ensuring both programme relevance and student success (School of Business)
- Support for Māori in secondary schools (Science Wānanga, Hands-On at Otago, Otago University Advanced School Sciences Academy), transition programmes for new students at Otago, support networks at divisional level and in departments for existing students and also support for researchers and teaching staff who wish to incorporate Te Ao Māori in their teaching and research (Division of Sciences).
- Te Whakapuāwai programme ensures that students receive information, support and opportunities for whanaungatanga with other Māori Health Sciences First Year students; Tū Taura Hauora is a retention and professional development programme for Māori students enrolled in the professional programmes and provides direct links and opportunities for students to engage with other health professional programme students and Māori health professionals working in the community (Division of Health Sciences).

The pending appointment of an 0.5 FTE senior academic staff member to the Office of Māori Development will contribute much to the growth of Māori knowledge and pedagogy in the

curricula via membership of academic committees that focus on curriculum development, for example, the University's Boards of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies.

Māori staff

The growth and development of Māori staff to ensure that the University has the capacity to achieve the Teaching and Learning goals outlined in the Māori Strategic Framework is being addressed on a number of fronts since the last Report. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has put a hold on some of the key strategies developed to support this goal, and uncertainty about the future continues to affect recruitment. However, there are some initiatives that we continue to work on such as:

- The Office of Māori Development is engaged in a project with Human Resources and the Higher Education Development Centre to embed cultural competency in areas of recruitment, appointment, staff training and professional development and the academic progression process
- Māori input into the recruitment processes for academic and professional staff is now in place, including Māori presence on interview panels
- The Kaitohutohu Māori role is now full time and permanent. This is a step forward in enabling the delivery of the Māori Strategic Framework's tikanga and te reo aspirations across the University
- Te Reo classes for senior executive members were established and commenced delivery in late 2019
- The Associate Deans (Māori) roles embedded in all four academic divisions provide a strong Māori voice in decision making at divisional level.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

Māori knowledge and pedagogy in curricula

The [Māori Strategic Framework 2022](#) has the goal of undertaking a Māori curriculum audit across all papers and then developing recommendations on how to increase Māori content in relevant curriculum areas. The Office of Māori Development is working with Māori academic staff, through Poutama Ara Rau, to incorporate appropriate Māori knowledge and pedagogy into papers offered at Otago.

Maori staff

The Audit Panel made several comments on the need for the University to ensure that it has the Māori staff capacity to achieve the goals outlined in the Māori Strategic Framework 2022. The growth and development of Māori staff is specifically addressed in the Māori Strategic Framework and is also the subject of a current Universities New Zealand initiative that brings together Te Kāhui Amokura and Human Resources managers to develop strategies to increase the number of Māori academic and professional staff across all eight NZ universities.

Assessment in te reo Māori

As previously identified, the pool of Māori staff throughout the New Zealand University sector that is qualified and competent to assess in te reo Māori is very small. Te Kāhui Amokura is developing a list of competent assessors in te reo across all NZ universities that each University can utilise to assess in te reo. Additionally, the Office of Māori Development is supporting two staff members to become certified te reo Māori translators through Te Taura Whiri o Te reo Māori.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Recommendation R4

Reference: AQA Report page 36; Guideline Statement GS 4.3

The Panel recommends that the University consider how it identifies students at risk of under-performance early in their studies and how it ensures that all students receive useful and timely feedback on their performance.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

A structural outcome of the Support Services Review was the establishment of Student Development (part of Student Experience within the Shared Services Division) to provide dedicated course advice to students including targeted advice to those students identified as under-performing. In addition, the Head of Student Success (previously Director, First-Year Experience) was given a broader remit to work in this area leading the Office of Student Success (part of Student and Academic Services reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)). The Head of Student Success is a member of the Student Advising Working Group (SAWG) and is actively involved in all discussions of this group. A close working relationship has been formed between Student Development and the Office of Student Success to support timely provision of advice to students.

Students are referred to Student Development from academic departments/units, Disability Information & Support, and other areas from across the university. Student Development has improved its online presence and shares timely content across the university through electronic and poster communications. Student Development also offers workshops and drop-in sessions in Residential Colleges, which helps to raise student awareness of the support available. Members of the Student Development team participate in careers expos and recruitment events promoting the university to prospective students, which creates an opportunity to highlight the support available prior to the students arriving on campus.

As part of ongoing Student Management System (SMS) Enhancements work, discussions are active about how student results are collected and reported. This work will support future activity in proactively identifying students at risk and in turn providing early intervention support.

Further information relevant to this recommendation has been provided in response to [Recommendation R2](#), [Affirmation A2](#) and [Enhancement E2](#).

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

First Year Experience

Much of the work in this area falls under the purview of the Director, First Year Experience. The Director received two Quality Improvement Grants in 2017 to pilot proactive interventions with first year students:

- A project working with a large (2000 students) first year health sciences paper examining student engagement using Blackboard (the University's Learning Management System), attendance in the first laboratory, and achievement in the midterm. Students identified as unengaged were followed up to check on any issues they might be facing and to offer additional focused tutorials.
- The provision of personal student-centred advice to every first-year student who received an academic progress warning notification at the end of their first semester of study. This intervention utilised existing structures, such as Residential Colleges, and Māori, International and Pacific Island support services. A retention officer was hired to contact first-year students who were living in the local community and were not associated with one of the services identified above.

Evaluation of these projects will allow for assessment of the success of a targeted and proactive approach based on early indicators of engagement and achievement and may support the development of a wider range of such support for under-performing students. Outcomes may also provide support for more widespread recording of early internal assessment results in the University's Student Management System (making assessment of performance at an early stage in the semester more feasible) to allow coordinated support at an early stage for a greater number of under-performing students.

The Director, First Year Experience also has a number of other projects underway or completed which will inform future practice in assisting at-risk and under-performing students. These include:

- identification of, and provision of direct advice to, at-risk students prior to their commencing studies at the University (working with Planning and Funding and Academic Services)
- evaluation of the impact of workload on student performance in the first year of study, to assist in formulating workload recommendations in University information and course advising (working with Planning and Funding and the Course Advising Working Group).

These projects are also referenced in the response to [Enhancement E2](#).

Course Advising Group

Apart from course advising planning, the University's Course Advising Group has, in relation to under-performing students:

- reviewed and revised the communication that is sent to under-performing students at the end of the first semester, to make this more student-friendly and focused on available support for students
- initiated consultation on workload advice for first year students to support positive academic outcomes (carrying on from the research of the Director, First-Year Experience mentioned above).

Further information on the work of the Course Advising Group can be found in the response to [Recommendation R2](#).

Conditional Enrolment provisions

At the request of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), the Manager, Policy and Compliance in Academic Services carried out a comprehensive review of the Conditional Enrolment provisions under the University's Academic Progress Policy. The review, which included consultation with the Course Advising Group and other relevant parties, focused on whether current provisions were fit for purpose. It included recommendations on enhancing proactive support for at-risk students (identified at the end of first semester or earlier) and under-performing students placed on Conditional Enrolment. The review report has been appraised (positively, with only minor adjustments) by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), and it is scheduled to go to the DVC/PVC Group on 4th December 2017 as the first step in the formal process of being accepted as an amended policy after final adjustments by the Course Advising Group. The review reveals a process that, in general, works well but some small changes are proposed that will make it better operationally within the context of changes brought about by the Support Services Review.

Support Services Review Business Case

The initial Business Case produced in relation to the University's Support Services Review makes recommendations for service structures likely to enhance early identification and support of under-performing students. This includes a student academic progression service, which would proactively monitor student performance throughout the semester, and a dedicated student development service that, in addition to providing course advice to all students, could provide targeted advice to identified under-performing students. These recommendations also support enhanced use of Results 2 functionality in the University's Student Management System to record internal assessment, so that performance can be monitored early in the semester.

Next steps

Looking forward to the next couple of years, the following activities are likely to be significant in terms of the University's response to this recommendation:

- The implementation of final recommendations arising from the Support Services Review, including the potential for new service structures which will be involved in identifying and intervening with under-performing students.
- As a corollary of changes under the Support Services Review, a possible University push to bring more internal assessment data into Results 2.
- The embedding and/or widening of scope of initiatives piloted by the Director, First Year Experience, where these are evaluated as having value.
- Enhancement of support and provisions in response to recommendations made following the 2017 report on Conditional Enrolment.
- The consolidation of the Student Services Division and Academic Services to create a new division called *Student and Academic Services*, which will ensure all student-related processes are well connected with procedural translational operations being effected separately but in concert with activities in the new division.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Recommendation R5

Reference: AQA Report page 43-44; Guideline Statement GS 5.5

The Panel recommends that the University develop mechanisms for ensuring that students are made aware of changes and improvements that are informed by their feedback.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

The initiatives mentioned in the One-year follow-up report are ongoing. Enacting this recommendation is a University-wide responsibility as individual lecturers also need to proactively communicate with their students to highlight changes that have been made in response to feedback received through evaluations.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

Efforts thus far have focused on developing mechanisms for ensuring that students are made aware of changes and improvements informed by their course and teaching evaluation feedback as part of a suite of initiatives planned to respond to staff concerns arising from the move to fully online delivery of course and teaching evaluations at the University and reported to Senate in July 2017.

These include the following enhancement, which is of relevance to this recommendation: *Identify and implement strategies (including 'closing the feedback loop') to improve response rates of online evaluations based on local and external good practice.*

In response, the following initiatives are underway or planned:

- A standard PowerPoint slide has been placed in the PowerPoint slide decks for lecturers to use as a prompt to discuss evaluations
- New standard material is being created for inclusion in course outlines to standardise the way lecturers communicate changes that have arisen as a result of student evaluation feedback
- A dialogue has begun with OUSA on student engagement with evaluations
- A research project on students' perceptions of student evaluations is underway which, should shed light on ways to communicate with students regarding the impact of evaluations
- "Using Evaluations to Improve Teaching and Demonstrate Quality" was the topic of a Quality Forum on 6 November 2017; the topic was discussed and good practice was shared by a panel consisting of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and three highly regarded tertiary teaching award lecturers, facilitated by the Acting Director, Higher Education Development Centre (HEDC).

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Recommendation R6

Reference: AQA Report page 55-56; Guideline Statement GS 7.2

The Panel recommends that the University assess and consider the impacts of variations in availability of departmental and academic division support for postgraduate research students.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

As noted in the One-year follow-up report, the University sets guidelines for the minimum levels of support for all graduate research candidates. However, we are aware that there are variations in the support required and provided, including access to research funding support, at the individual level (i.e. between supervisors), at the departmental level, between disciplines and across divisions. One of the recommendations from the Review of Master's research degrees was the need to ensure *'that research Masters' students... are made aware of the various resources and support that are available for them to access*. This recommendation, amongst others, was circulated to the University community, but there is still significant variation in the transparency of resourcing for Master's students. It remains a challenge to get departments and programmes to provide graduate research candidates with key information about resourcing. The role of Associate Deans Postgraduate is relatively new in some divisions, and these staff play a key role in providing leadership on graduate research matters. They regularly liaise with Postgraduate Coordinators in each department. This recommendation has been drawn to the attention of Associate Deans Postgraduate, and their assistance sought in trying to ensure postgraduate students are made aware of possible resources.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

Currently the [Guidelines for Resources for Graduate Research Candidates](#) state that the acceptance of a graduate research candidate represents the Department's/School's commitment to support his/her research project by providing the following resources:

- i. access to appropriate resources to undertake the candidate's research project (for example: equipment, materials, facilities, and funding for fieldwork or data collection or other activities considered essential to the successful completion of the project)
- ii. an appropriately equipped working and quiet study/writing space, including secure storage
- iii. after-hours access to departmental facilities, provided both safety and security requirements are met

- iv. access to appropriate computing resources
- v. access to e-mail and appropriate internet communications
- vi. access to library facilities including interloans and database searching
- vii. access to a telephone
- viii. for doctoral candidates, support to present at one major international conference at least (each Division is required to establish a policy about the level of support), in addition to support from Departments and Divisions to attend other conferences where appropriate and feasible.

The University already sets guidelines for the minimum levels of support for all graduate research candidates. However, we are aware that there are variations in the support required and provided, including access to research funding support, at the individual level (i.e. between supervisors), at the departmental level, between disciplines and across divisions. A recent review of Masters by Research Programmes (report dated June 2017) considered the impacts of variations of support for postgraduate research students, with particular reference to research Masters' students. The review found that:

While there appears to be no major issues with the resourcing of research Masters' students per se, the Working Party did note a disjuncture in understanding can sometimes occur between the Department and the student's understanding of what is and what is not provided for during the research period.

Consequently, it was recommended that:

To mitigate this ambiguity the Working Party recommends heightening the transparency around the resourcing of research Masters' students during the admission process. Key resourcing aspects addressed should include such things as the allocation of resource space, computer equipment, printing and internet, along with access to tea/coffee facilities, research expenses and departmental common rooms.

and

To further improve transparency, it is recommended that research Masters' resource and support information should be documented in Departmental Postgraduate Information Handbooks, available in print and/or online.

It also commented that:

Although differences in the resourcing of research Masters' students exist across divisions and departments, no significant equity issues were identified. The Working Party did note, however, that differences in divisional and departmental structures, funding allocations and the research needs of individual students would preclude a 'one size fits all' approach to resourcing these students.

As a consequence, it was recommended that:

The University take action to ensure that research Masters' students... are made aware of the various resources and support that are available for them to access.

The *Review Report on Masters by Research Programmes* is currently being circulated to relevant committees and the three recommendations (above) are expected to be actioned over the coming months. The recommendations will also be used to inform changes that may be required to regulations and guidelines for doctoral and other research degrees.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Affirmation A1

Reference: AQA Report page 11; Guideline Statement GS 1.4

The Panel affirms the development of the Student Desktop and considers that, with fine-tuning, it will offer considerable benefit for students.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

The Student Desktop continues to be developed with new features and new applications being added on a regular basis as required. During the COVID-19 lockdown period the virtual Student Desktop allowed students to access applications - that in many other institutions would have been only available in computer rooms - on their own devices at home wherever they happened to be in the world. This facility proved invaluable for many courses and lecturers who were able to continue as if they were on campus teaching.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

Awareness and Enhancement of the Student Desktop

The University's Student IT team has introduced a number of information and training sessions for students that introduce the Student Desktop and inform students of its advantages. As well as holding these sessions at residential colleges during the start of the first semester, they are available regularly throughout the year. Student IT have also initiated a communication campaign relating to the student desktop, which includes digital signage, Facebook posts, posters, and website on their website, which discuss the Student Desktop and how students can take full advantage of it.

As well as increasing the amount of information available about the Student Desktop for students, we have also been targeting the University's academic staff. ITS has included information regarding the Student Desktop and how academics may take advantage of it within their teaching in a number of forums, including departmental seminars and the New Academic Staff Conference.

The University continues to enhance the Student Desktop on a continual basis. It now has over 140 applications available to students not only within university computer rooms but also on their own devices, wherever they happen to be.

Each year there are over 1.5 million logins to the Student Desktop and over 85% of students have accessed the Student Desktop. In the past two years, a number of academic departments

have also moved to use the Staff Desktop, which has enabled them to take advantage of all of the features that students currently enjoy through the Student Desktop.

Reported issues with ‘library applications’

After the University’s Cycle 5 Academic Audit report was received, Information Technology Services noted the comments regarding apparent issues with Library Software on the Student Desktop and sought further information from the University Library. It was determined that Library Software was in fact working as required, and the issues that were referred to had been resolved eight months previously. To ensure the Library’s IT requirements are continually captured and communication is improved, we have put in place a thrice yearly meeting between those developing and supporting the Student Desktop and the University Library.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Affirmation A2

Reference: AQA Report page 18-19; Guideline Statement GS 2.2

The Panel affirms the consolidated approach to transition that the University is taking with the establishment of the Director, First-Year Experience position and committee.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

In August 2018, the First-Year Experience portfolio was subsumed into a new Office of Student Success (reporting to Student and Academic Services within the Academic Division) with the Director becoming Head leading four part-time staff. The main focus of the portfolio remains on first-year students but with the capacity for the new Office to follow students into their second and later years of study in order to research ways of supporting their success.

The Locals Programme is now run from the Office of Student Success and is an established component of the University of Otago's first-year experience providing support for those students that live at home, flat or board in their first year. The Head of the Office of Student Success works closely with the events team from the Division of External Engagement to support Academic Orientation activities.

The Head continues to contribute to professional development and runs workshops on the first-year experience and curriculum design for first-year papers. The Head also sits on the following committees and groups: Academic Integrity Working Group, Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT), Student Advising Working Group (SAWG), Foundation Studies Academic Board, Collegiate Leaders' Forum, University of Otago Student Leadership Award, Student App Governance Committee, Student Engagement Research Group, Māori and Pacific Peoples Scholarship panel, and the Locals Collegiate Community Advisory Group.

In mid-2019 a Student Success Advisory Group convened by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) was established to have an overview of student success at the University of Otago and to support the investigation and implementation of institutional change that supports student success. Its membership is drawn from across the University and includes the Otago University Students' Association (OUSA). The vision and terms of reference are:

Vision

To enable an outstanding experience for all students at the University of Otago that supports transition, achievement, retention, and success by utilising a research-informed, whole-of-institute approach.

Terms of Reference

- To provide strategic oversight for the University of Otago in the area of student success
- To provide ideas, input and support for the development of initiatives around student success.
- To identify successful transition, achievement, retention, and success strategies.
- To promote the implementation of successful strategies to the multiple academic communities, at the University, Division, School and Departmental levels, in order support the whole-of-institution approach to student success.
- To be advocates of a positive student experience and student success.
- Each member to provide regular updates to their community and to seek input from their community, as required.

This Group replaces the First-Year Experience Advisory Board that was reported on in the University of Otago's 2017 One-Year follow-up Report.

The work of the Office of Student Success, is also referenced in the responses to [Enhancement E2](#) and [Recommendation R4](#).

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

The Director, First Year Experience was appointed in January 2016. The First Year Experience Advisory Board was created in June 2016 and agreed on a Vision and Terms of Reference (below) in August 2016. Planning for a First Year Student Experience Strategic Plan has commenced and will resume after pertinent decisions are taken in the Support Services Review.

First-Year Experience Advisory Board

Vision: To provide an outstanding first-year student experience at the University of Otago that supports transition, achievement, retention and success.

Terms of Reference

- To provide guidance and support for the Director, First-Year Experience.
- To assist with strategic planning around the first-year student experience.
- To help develop initiatives that support an outstanding first-year student experience.
- To foster and promote transition into an academic community.
- To be advocates for a positive first-year student experience.

The Director, First Year Experience is also the Director of the Locals Programme which supports first-year students living in the local community, flatting, boarding, or living at home. In 2017, 140 students attended welcome events, 180 students the convocation and 100 the sports day. The Locals Facebook page has 285 members and 405 students receive the Locals newsletter.

To ensure a first-year student focus across the University, the Director, First Year Experience is a member of the University Course Advising Group, Equity Advisory Committee, Otago Student Leadership Committee, and Health Sciences First Year Review Consideration Group.

The Director, First Year Experience contributes to professional staff development, such as the Academic Leadership Development and Connecting with Our Community Programmes and facilitates workshops for Departments and Divisions.

The work of the Director, First Year Experience, is also referenced in the response to [Enhancement E2](#) and [Recommendation R4](#).

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Affirmation A3

Reference: AQA Report page 27-28; Guideline Statement GS 3.5

The Panel affirms the University's development of the Matariki Network of Universities and considers that it offers considerable potential for benchmarking, opportunities for students and staff, and other organisational learning.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

Benchmarking and organisational learning

Benchmarking is becoming a natural part of any interaction with a Matariki Network of Universities (MNU) partner, whether as informal contacts between academic and professional staff or in more formal settings. Benchmarking has also continued in the area of best library practice.

Following a meeting of the MNU International Leads in 2018, Durham, Otago, University of Western Australia (UWA) and Uppsala agreed to share International Student Barometer data to highlight and identify areas of best practice with respect to support of international students. The MNU Secretariat has been working with colleagues across the network to facilitate discussions on mental health and the prevention of sexual violence. Staff from MNU partners have contributed across the network as panel members on Quality Reviews and selection panels for academic and professional staff positions. The Office of Sustainability has been specifically connected with network counterparts to learn from their experiences in all matters relating to the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (UNSDG) and individual institutional sustainability goals.

In 2019, Otago asked partners to share information on their current provision for language and learning support, to assist with our plans to improve services in this area. As a result, two pilot schemes have been implemented to provide a better idea of where the challenges are and where resources should be targeted: the first focuses on English Language writing for international PhD students in the School of Business and the second is a multilingual survey to see which languages are used at Otago.

This year, the MNU's focus on *partnering for a better world* has been highlighted by the global pandemic. As a way of documenting this unprecedented moment in time and to learn from our shared experiences, the MNU has established an online photo gallery to capture our unique responses and to demonstrate how partnerships can provide support during times of extreme difficulty and challenge. See: <https://www.matarikinetwerk.org/matariki-covid-19-impressions-gallery/>

Research Collaboration

The University of Otago is the lead member of the MNU's Brain and Mind (Integrative Neuroscience) research theme. Otago's National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies is an active contributor to the Peace and Conflict theme led by Uppsala University. Queen's University leads the Sustainability, Environment & Resources theme and aligned to this theme, Otago's Centre for Sustainability has recently outlined to our partners our desire to carry out more collaborative activity associated with the 17 UNSDGs. Matariki meetings related to the various research themes were held in Otago (Computational Neuroscience) and Uppsala (Humanities Colloquium, Peace and Conflict) in 2018.

Opportunities for students and staff

The annual Matariki Lecture series continues. Tübingen was the host university in 2018 with Professor Alexander Densmore from Durham University speaking on *Lessons from the 2015 Nepal Earthquake*. The University of Otago hosted the 2019 lecture delivered by Professor Jane Lydon of UWA on *Imperial Emotions: Empathy, Politics and Global Networks*, see <https://www.matarikinetwerk.org/2020/01/07/matariki-lecture-2019/>. The 2020 lecture, scheduled for March, was postponed due to the global pandemic.

The Matariki Humanities Network met in December 2019 at UWA. This meeting was the first in a new series of meetings combining the academic and library streams and there were 24 attendees representing all seven Matariki partner institutions. Attendees discussed common challenges facing digital humanities such as resourcing, nomenclature, institutional structures, and culture. The ability to share practice, collaborate on joint projects and influence strategies at our respective institutions were seen as opportunities presented by the meeting.

The Matariki Network's inaugural 3MT® contest was launched in 2019. Students from Dartmouth College, Durham University, Queen's University, University of Otago and UWA competed in a virtual competition which was judged by a panel of experts from across the network. A student from Otago received the People's Choice award after receiving the most online votes. This competition will be run again in 2020 in an online, digital format.

The University of Otago continues to offer Matariki Staff Travel Awards to enable academics and professional staff to visit a Matariki partner as a value-added extra when attending a conference or activity nearby. Three such awards were made in 2018 and six in 2019. The University also prioritises Matariki partner institutions for student exchange by offering student travel grants to these prospective study destinations.

A student leadership role (part-time and paid) was created in 2019, following the award of a Quality Improvement Grant, to lead a "home" team of students interested in participating in matters with the potential for global reach/impact. The role arranged events which supported students to find ways to connect and engage on global matters. An important outcome was the recognition that Otago students face similar problems, challenges, and opportunities to their counterparts in partner universities. This realisation widened the perspective of students involved in the programme and has influenced, anecdotally at least, the study choices and research interests of some students.

Global Citizenship Forum

The Global Citizenship Forum continues as an opportunity for students and staff from the partner universities to come together to consider a topic or theme. In 2018 Otago was host and the theme was Community Engagement. In 2019, the host university was Durham and the activity based around three main strands: Empowering Learners, Community Engagement and Creating Spaces for Dialogue. Otago's three student representatives presented on:

- the student-led initiative *Silverline* and its promotion of student mental health and wellbeing
- student engagement through volunteer projects, and creating a wider student community
- Otago's new Te Whare Tāwharau service, with a focus on how students themselves deliver that service and the steps being taken to reduce the impact of sexual violence within our campus communities.

Matariki Indigenous Programme

The 2018 programme was held at Dartmouth College. Otago staff and four students attended and again this event proved to be a valuable learning experience for those involved. Queen's University was the 2019 host, and the themes: Learning, Language and Land. The Otago delegation comprised four senior students, all fluent speakers of Te Reo, and two staff members. Participants were able to explore opportunities for shared research on topics of mutual interest and experience the range of cooperative teaching and learning styles demonstrated during the programme.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

Benchmarking

Benchmarking and sharing experiences are an important goal for the Matariki Network of Universities (MNU). In the past year, the seven member universities have catalogued information on new developments in policies, projects and other areas which are of shared interest as follows:

- Supporting first year students in the transition to university
- How we listen to the international student voice
- Reviewing how and where teaching is delivered
- Professional development/training for research students
- Student life on campus (sexual harassment/assault and alcohol issues)
- Internationalisation of staff and students
- (Re)structuring of support services and operations

These benchmarking topics will be discussed at an MNU Executive meeting in October 2017 and the expectation is that one or two items will be chosen to be explored in more depth.

There is already strong MNU benchmarking activity underway in the Libraries. The next meeting of the MNU Library stream is in October 2017 at Tübingen. It will focus on:

1. Subscriptions, Big Deals, Open Access Transformation – strategies and best practices in the Matariki member countries.
2. Next round of the benchmarking programme: further development and application opportunities of the Library Assessment Capability Maturity Model.

The University continues to fund visits of academic, and from 2017, professional staff, to MNU members for both research and benchmarking activities. In 2016, 11 staff received funding for this purpose.

Research collaboration

Matariki meetings related to the various research themes have been held in Tübingen, Baltimore, Queen’s and Durham over the last 12 months.

The inaugural Matariki lecture was held at Queen’s University in February 2017. The lecture celebrates leading research from across the Network. This year Professor Denise Anthony from Dartmouth spoke on the topic “Big Data, Cyber Security and Healthcare”. In 2018 the lecture will be held at Tübingen and in 2019 at Otago.

Research Activities planned for 2017/18

Event	Date	Location
Matariki Humanities Colloquium: Languages	9 – 12 October 2017	Tübingen
Matariki African Studies Colloquium	October 2017	Dartmouth
Conference: Food Waste and Policy	November 2017	UWA
Workshop: Multi-scale flow dynamics of rocks and ice	2017	UWA
Workshop: Computational Neuroscience of Event Cognition	12 – 14 February 2018	Otago
Matariki Humanities Colloquium: Humanities	2018	Uppsala

Global Citizenship

Following a global citizenship forum that was held in Uppsala in April 2016 there have been continued virtual discussions between both students and staff around areas of potential collaboration. This led to plans for a student led, staff facilitated, Matariki forum on community engagement held in Otago in July 2017.

Matariki Indigenous Programme

The first Matariki Indigenous Programme was hosted at Otago in June 2016 and brought together students and staff from Dartmouth, Durham, Queen’s, UWA and Otago. This 2 week programme provided students with an opportunity to learn more about each other’s cultures and, particularly, Māori culture. It was jointly run by the University and Ngai Tahu. The second Indigenous Programme was hosted by UWA in June 2017. Both programmes were

valued very highly by the students and staff have also benefited from the opportunities to explore further collaborative teaching and research projects

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Affirmation A4

Reference: AQA Report page 42; Guideline Statement GS 5.4

The Panel affirms the University's review of Northern campuses' support services and its signalled intention (Enhancement E6) to better capture feedback from students on other campuses.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

This process has now become business as usual. Responses from Christchurch and Wellington based students form the basis of specific Student Opinion Survey - Support Services Improvement reports. The main issue is that the sometimes-small number of student responses received can limit the value of the quantitative information collected.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

The Support Services Section of the Student Opinion Survey has been extensively re-designed in 2017. The new format of the survey enables better capture and better reporting of feedback from students based on other campuses. In addition to asking questions relevant to the support services provided in each campus the new questionnaire explicitly asks respondents to comment on their overall experience of support services in their particular location.

Data collection for the 2017 survey opened on 15 September and closed on 11 October. Sufficient responses have been received for the production of campus specific reports. Processing is now underway. The extensive redesign of the survey and organisational changes arising from the Student Support Review means that a new suite of reports will need to be created for this survey round. The aim is to have the reports available for distribution in the first quarter of 2018.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Affirmation A5

Reference: AQA Report page 49; Guideline Statement GS 6.3

The Panel affirms the University's enhancement initiative to implement a new course and teaching evaluation system and to produce summary reports for heads of departments

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

Management of the Evaluations function was transferred from the Higher Education Development Centre to the Quality Advancement Unit in 2018. A new system summarising teacher evaluation feedback received by departments and programmes over several years was created the same year. This report is now routinely used as a resource by departments and internal review panels and the new reporting format is being used as the basis for the development of a new course evaluation feedback summary report for heads of academic units. However, finalisation of this latter summary report has been delayed, partly because the new report uses more advanced statistical analysis than initially envisaged (incorporating the findings of a yearlong project conducted in collaboration with the Department of Mathematics and Statistics) but also due to other projects and the COVID-19 situation. A draft report is currently being circulated for consultation. The final format should be released before the end of the 2020 academic year.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

In February 2016, the University implemented a new capability that allows lecturers to combine questions about teaching and the course into one questionnaire. Previously each question type had to be administered in separate questionnaires. If lecturers use this new option, the experience is simplified for student respondents.

Work is under way to enable the production of a summary report for Heads of Departments that will provide an overview of the course evaluation results for their departments. New summary reports are expected to be available to Heads of Departments in 2018.

In early 2017, all of the institutional evaluation instruments moved to an online only platform. Average response rates have declined as a result of the transition and the University is currently investigating ways to improve response rates. [Recommendation 5](#) discusses some initiatives in place to mitigate this area of concern.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Affirmation A6

Reference: AQA Report page 55; Guideline Statement GS 7.1

The Panel affirms the University considering making training for new PhD supervisors mandatory.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

The requirement for mandatory training for new supervisors is now embedded in confirmation processes. The Pro-Vice-Chancellors have training requirements for supervision identified in confirmation processes and can monitor this through confirmation reporting. The Higher Education Development Centre, in collaboration with the Graduate Research School, provides a programme of support for supervisors. A few key workshops are promoted as essential for new supervisors.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

In July 2016, the University Senate approved a proposal that new supervisors be required to undertake an induction course regarding key processes and the craft of supervision as part of their confirmation process (noting the endorsement of the Board of Graduate Studies at its July 2016 meeting). The Senate agreed that the Pro-Vice-Chancellors would embed a requirement within Divisional confirmation processes for new supervisors to undertake satisfactory induction regarding the key processes and practice of supervision. Consequently, there is now an expectation of mandatory training for new PhD supervisors during their confirmation period.

The Higher Education Development Centre in conjunction with the Graduate Research School offer a programme of support for the professional development of supervisors and the core training sessions are offered on each campus.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Affirmation A7

Reference: AQA Report page 57; Guideline Statement GS 7.3

The Panel affirms the continuation of improving processes for the reporting of doctoral candidates' progress using eVision.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

The review of research management processes was undertaken as planned and identified progress reporting as a major pain point and in need of improvement. However, a higher priority for eVision improvement was the admission process for research degrees, and consequently the Student Management System (SMS) Business Analysts have been working on this area, with this work nearly complete. It is hoped that the next key area for work will be progress reporting. The Graduate Research School is currently working with the Enabling Excellence Programme team (who provide implementation support to deliver on the proposals and benefits of the Support Services Review) on progress reporting, and how we can improve the process, whilst waiting for the system improvements to eVision to be made.

A Graduate Research Framework is being developed, and the approval chain for progress reporting (and other administrative processes) has been simplified, which will streamline the overall process.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

The Student Management System (SMS) Support Office in conjunction with the Graduate Research School is reviewing processes related to the administration of research students, including progress reporting. As part of this process, nine consultation sessions were undertaken with staff (including one session for Christchurch and Wellington campus staff). Sessions are still being held with students and will be completed soon. Once all the sessions are concluded, a report will be prepared and considered by the SMS Operational Group in consultation with the SMS Support Office and the Graduate Research School to recommend a programme of enhancements to eVision and relevant administrative processes. Consequent changes resulting from implementation of the Support Services Reviews will be incorporated into any recommendations.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Enhancement E1

Reference: Otago Portfolio page 15-16, 86; Guideline Statement GS 1.3

To evaluate how well the recent MOU signed between the University and OUSA which established three new avenues to promote direct communication between the two entities is working. The new channels for interactions between the University and OUSA are: a monthly meeting between the VC and the OUSA President, the possibility for OUSA to make a submission to VCAG and a biannual summit between the VC, the OUSA Executive and other nominees of the VC.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

The Vice-Chancellor confirms that the intentions of the MOU are continuing to be well met. Interactions and engagement between the University and the OUSA President are very well entrenched in everyday practice, and the relationship has become even stronger this year, largely as a result of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. To quote the Vice-Chancellor:

Beginning on March 19, which was prior to Level 4 Lockdown, we began meeting in daily 45-minute huddles, where each member of the senior leadership team shared the progress and roadblocks in their portfolio. We made big decisions every day, sometimes on the basis of very little information, but we made them together. In addition to the senior leadership team, those huddles also included our incident controller, an expert in public health, and most importantly perhaps, our student president. The inclusion of a student voice in our decision making was probably one of the best decisions I have made this year - potentially, it is the best decision I have ever made as Vice-Chancellor. Having that student voice at the table meant that students were at the heart of every decision we made. In addition, bringing a student inside the tent and sharing everything with them, including the university's financial position, meant that he truly understood the challenges we were facing, which in turn shaped his expectations and those of the wider student community.

There is a process in place for the Vice-Chancellor to discuss the MOU with the incoming OUSA President each year.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Vice-Chancellor and the OUSA President was signed on 24 November 2015. In 2017 small amendments were made, which were signed off by the existing President of OUSA, Mr Hugh Baird. It is anticipated that new OUSA Presidents will be asked to confirm the MOU, including Caitlin Barlow-Groome for 2018.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Enhancement E2

Reference: Otago Portfolio page 27, 86; Guideline Statement GS 2.2

To consolidate and advance activities associated with first-year student experience and transition by establishing the new position of Director First-Year Experience supported by a First-Year Experience Board charged with the development of an undergirding strategy that will steer university-wide programmes to boost student achievement in its broadest sense.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

The First-Year Experience Board has been replaced by a Student Success Advisory Board convened by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). See [Affirmation A2](#) for more detail including terms of reference for the new Board.

Academic Orientation continues to be a major piece of work for the Office of Student Success (the entity now responsible for the First-Year Experience portfolio), with 2085 first-year students attending the UNIO101 lectures in 2020 (2019:1942; 2018:2144). This lecture is supported by a new booklet, developed in conjunction with Marketing, “Welcome to Otago: Your guide to first year” that is supplied to all first-year students and since 2018 has been complemented by the Blackboard site, UNIO101: Getting started at Otago, which is now open to all undergraduate students.

The Office of Student Success has also run a project to coordinate university-wide proactive contact with students who have failed more than half of their points at the halfway point in the academic year for the last four years. In 2017 and 2018 all first-year students that met the criteria were contacted. In 2019 and this year, all undergraduate students subject to the Academic Progress Policy or on Conditional Enrolment were included in this project. In general, students that engage with the support on offer have performed better academically in the second semester. The retention rates of those students have also been better.

The Office of Student Success will continue to work to support institutional change to enable the offer of proactive advice to student success. For example, during the current COVID-19 challenge the Office had the UNIO101: Getting started at Otago Blackboard site opened to all University of Otago students to host information to support their success at this time. The Office developed a guide to “Adjusting your study habits for learning online” (posted on UNIO101, sent to all Otago students and posted on the TEC website), “Increasing your positive experiences” (posted on UNIO101), and “Exams and final assessments for Semester One under COVID-19 circumstances” (posted on UNIO101 and sent to all Otago students).

The response to Enhancement E2 is closely related to both [Affirmation A2](#), and [Recommendation R4](#).

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

The response to Enhancement E2 is closely related to both [Affirmation A2](#), which reports on the Vision and Terms of Reference for the First Year Experience Board, and [Recommendation R4](#), which addresses identification of under-performing students.

Academic Orientation continues to evolve to better suit student needs. The two Academic Orientation presentations given in 2016 were consolidated into one and presented to 1625 students in 2017. Four additional presentations were given on Course Advice, Decision making, Library Support and Student Learning which were attended by a total of 277 students. The University's 2017 College Residents Survey indicated that 89% of the students surveyed attended academic orientation, of which 98% were positive about the programme provided.

The University's learning management system, Blackboard (BB), opened at the start of Orientation Week. The combined Academic Orientation presentation will continue in 2018 and will be supported by a new BB transition site, which will allow first-year students to engage with university transition before they arrive on campus.

A First-Year Student Experience Colloquium was held in November 2016 with experts in the field, to discuss the first-year experience at the University and identify first-year student projects for 2017. Three projects to enhance student achievement were piloted in 2017 with a full analysis to be completed by early 2018:

- Data indicate that students who are less academically prepared will have a higher pass rate if they take three single semester papers in the first semester of their first year. For the pilot, first-year students identified as 'at-risk' in two colleges plus first-year International and Pacific students were contacted and offered non-deficit student-centred advice with the suggestion of taking university subjects that match their academic strengths and not over working (taking more than three papers) in semester one.
- In a large First Year Health Sciences paper early identification of poor student engagement was used to initiate personal contact and offer support. The measures of engagement were hits on BB, eVision and attendance at the first Laboratory. Early achievement was measured by midterm scores and students were offered catch-up tutorials.
- All first-year students that failed more than half of their points in the first semester are usually sent a warning notification from the University. This established process was used as a basis for the pilot intervention. The warning notice was rewritten to be more positive and give the message that "it's not too late to get back on track". This notice was followed up with an interview where the aim of the discussion was to identify the challenges in the first semester, identify the student's goals and mutually develop a plan to succeed in the second semester. Every first-year student who received a warning notification was contacted. College students were contacted by their college, Māori, Pacific and International students by the relevant support staff, and the remaining students by a Retention Officer.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit 2020 Mid-cycle Report

Enhancement E3

Reference: Otago Portfolio page 27, 86; Guideline Statement GS 2.2

To redesign the College Residents Survey in order to provide a more detailed picture of college residents' first-year experience with respect to transition to academic life and study, the learning environment and welfare and well-being.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

The College Residents Survey (CRS) was again revised in 2018, this time to extend the scope of the survey to encompass all first-year students (first-year in tertiary education). Consequently, the name of the survey was changed to College and First-Year Survey (CFS) to reflect the fact that local students are now part of the target population. This new format explores potential differences between the college and non-college-based population and other aspects of the first-year experience at Otago.

The CFS is normally conducted during the first part of each year but this pattern was disrupted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 situation. Instead, a shortened and modified version of the survey will be run during August and September. The intention is to revert to the usual pattern of delivery in 2021.

Report findings continue to be disseminated to key stakeholders by the means described in the 2017 One-year follow-up report.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

The College Resident Survey (CRS) was extensively redesigned in 2016. The new instrument marked a move away from an operationally focused instrument to a questionnaire exploring more wide-ranging issues relating to transition to academic life and study, the learning environment and welfare and well-being. In 2017 residents of University affiliated colleges were added to the target population of the survey and some minor modifications were also introduced to improve the quality of the questionnaire.

Through presentations and an extensive range of reports, data from the CRS has been reported to a variety of audiences including Heads of Colleges, senior management, parts of the External Engagement Division and some academic audiences with a particular interest in the first year experience.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Enhancement E4

Reference: Otago Portfolio page 28, 86; Guideline Statement GS 2.3

To reconsider course advising at an opportune point in the lifecycle of eVision recognising that, in delivering information and functionality for students, staff, prospective students and alumni over the web, the implementation and adoption of the eVision student management system has altered many of the University's customary business rules and modes of interaction with students.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

An outcome of the University's Support Services Review has been the creation of Student Experience which includes the Student Development portfolio responsible for the provision of course advice and planning and connecting to wider support networks.

Student Experience in collaboration with the Business Systems team in Information Technology Services (ITS) is tasked with making Student Management Systems (SMS) enhancements. Several enhancements have improved functionality of the system, and through the Steering Group for the project, further enhancement plans are in place through to December 2021. Running alongside the SMS enhancement work, a recent development has been the establishment of a SMS Software User Group to consider and prioritise system changes that sit outside the project but that would bring day-to-day improvements for areas across the University.

The Student Advising Working Group (SAWG) is the successor group to the Course Advising Group. Terms of Reference have been developed and the Group is reviewing the Student Advising Policy. Moving forward, the plan is to have as a standing item on all SAWG agendas, a progress update from the SMS Enhancements Project team.

The University has now entered Phase 2 of a Customer Relationship & Service Management (CRSM) project, in which Student Experience will be heavily involved. A Subject Matter Expert is working 0.8FTE on the project through until May 2021. Based on conversations to date, it is anticipated that there will be significant improvements delivered across Student Experience including for Student Development in supporting student appointment management and data reporting.

Further pertinent information is reported in the response to [Recommendation R2](#).

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

This enhancement falls under the purview of the Course Advising Group (as detailed in the response to [Recommendation R2](#)), although individual departments and areas within the University are also engaged in local initiatives in the context of the University's (relatively) new Student Management System, eVision.

The 2016 report on course advising and the subsequent work of the Course Advising Group focuses on developing advising plans within the context of the eVision environment. This requires a recognition that many new students will enrol and make paper and programme selections prior to arriving on campus. Schools' Liaison staff, who are represented on the Course Advising Group, have a key role to play in the initial advising for these students. Messaging on the importance and availability of course advice in information for new and continuing students (from the Schools' Liaison staff, in the Guide to Enrolment and on the University website) needs to be clear and student appropriate.

While eVision presents advising challenges, there is the opportunity to utilise its functionality to better communicate with students about course advice. Currently two eVision enhancements are under development to help support the provision of course advice:

- Enrolment questions for first year students, to determine what course advice they have received, and how comfortable they are with their course selection, to assist with direct follow up with some students. As of August 2017, this is being developed.
- Automated messaging of double degree students to recommend course advice and direct to appropriate advisers. As of August 2017, this is under investigation.

These and further initiatives of the Course Advising Group are detailed in the response to [Recommendation R2](#).

The Course Advising Group has also been involved in planning and evaluating face-to-face advising events, including dedicated course advising and degree planning days. This has seen the disestablishment of centrally coordinated degree planning and course advising days in Northern centres in 2017; these events were not considered to be sufficiently well attended to justify their resourcing. The Course Advising Group will continue to consider whether, and in what format, centrally coordinated face-to-face advising events should form part of the University's overall advising strategy.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Enhancement E5

Reference: Otago Portfolio page 34, 86; Guideline Statement GS 3.4

To implement annual reporting to monitor the progress of new academic programmes that have been conditionally approved by CUAP each year until the successful completion of the GYR and to evaluate effectiveness of the new system after one-year of operation.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

Annual Programme Reporting is now an embedded process at the University of Otago. The purpose of the Annual Programme Report is to ensure Departments monitor their new programmes and provide sufficient information to support and inform the Graduating Year Review (GYR). The process also provides data to the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Divisional Boards, the Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUGS) and the Board of Graduate Studies (BoGS) regarding the viability, success and sustainability of the recently initiated programmes. Furthermore, by reviewing Annual Programme Reports each year, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Divisional Boards, BUGS and BoGS are able to provide timely feedback to departments regarding how the monitoring processes for their new programmes may be improved. For example, feedback from BUGS and BoGS on the Annual Programme Reports submitted in 2019 resulted in the Boards' adopting a set of best practice guidelines drafted by the University's CUAP Representative regarding ways departments may gather evidence to demonstrate that graduates from their programmes are achieving the University's Graduate Profile. These guidelines are available on the University's website as a resource.

Annual Programme Reporting was implemented for the first time in 2016. Following the first year, the process was informally reviewed, and the information provided to programme coordinators enhanced for 2017. In the first four years – 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 – a total of 122 Annual Programme Reports were received and reviewed by BUGS and BoGS: 26 from Commerce, 34 from Health Sciences, 27 from Humanities, 32 from Sciences, 2 interdivisional reports from the Higher Education Development Centre, and 1 interdivisional report from the Bachelor of Arts and Science Board of Studies. Starting in 2018 feedback from BUGS and BoGS was provided to the course co-ordinator for each Annual Programme Report they submitted.

In 2015, prior to implementation of Annual Programme Reporting, workshops aimed at improving the quality of GYR Reports were run by the Higher Education Development Centre. The focus of these workshops was on gathering evidence through monitoring, evaluation, and feedback to support the GYR Reports. In 2015 and 2016 course co-ordinators with an upcoming GYR were invited to the workshop. However, from 2017, invitations were extended to include all course co-ordinators of programmes requiring Annual Programme Reports. The workshop provides support for course co-ordinators to write a strong, evidence-based Annual Programme Report or Self Review Report (and produce a

comprehensive “Evidence Portfolio”) to inform the GYR. The Workshop considers three main questions:

- 1) What makes a good programme?
- 2) What evidence can you gather that supports your claim that it is a good programme?
- 3) How can you use that evidence to demonstrate that you have a good programme?

2017 was the first year in which GYRs informed by Annual Programme Reports were submitted to CUAP. The feedback Otago received on the 2017 GYRs commended reports as good and the review processes as “robust”. The feedback received on the 2018 GYRs commended the Otago GYRs as “comprehensive and clearly outlined. A good range of data was considered.” The feedback received on 2019 GYRs described Otago’s GYR process as “robust and comprehensive” and the Otago’s reports as being “of a high quality”. Furthermore, feedback from Otago’s Quality Advancement Unit indicates a positive response from GYR Panels and Panel Conveners to the introduction of the Annual Programme Reporting process, which helps Departments accumulate and compile evidence ahead of the GYR year, consider how to report outcomes in relation to the goals and acceptability of the programme, and demonstrate responsiveness to feedback over time.

In addition to the expected improvement in quality of GYRs, a further benefit of the Annual Programme Reporting process is to help inform academic divisions and central University Boards about the viability and sustainability of programmes being offered and to provide an early indication of when the University may need to request a deferral for a programme’s GYR due date.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

The Annual Programme Reporting process was implemented by the University in an effort to improve the quality of Otago’s Graduating Year Reviews (GYRs) and enhance the monitoring of programmes being reviewed and approved by the University’s Board of Undergraduate Studies and Board of Graduate Studies. The concept of Annual Programme Reporting was approved by the DVCs/PVCs’ Advisory Group and by the Boards of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies. Guidelines for Annual Programme Reporting and an Annual Programme Report template were developed for the implementation of the process.

The purpose of the Annual Programme Report is to ensure Departments monitor their new programmes and provide sufficient information to support and inform the GYR. The process also provides data to the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Divisional Boards and the Boards of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies regarding the viability, success and sustainability of the recently initiated programmes.

Annual Programme Reporting was implemented for the first time in 2016. Following the first year, the process was informally reviewed, and the information provided to programme coordinators was enhanced for 2017. In the first two years, 2016 and 2017, a total of 64 Annual Programme Reports were received by the Boards of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies: 12 from Commerce, 16 from Health Sciences, 15 from Humanities, 19 from Sciences and 2 interdivisional reports from the Higher Education Development Centre.

In 2015, prior to the implementation of the Annual Programme Reporting, workshops aimed at improving the quality of the GYR Reports were run by the Higher Education Development Centre. The focus of the workshops was on gathering evidence through monitoring, evaluation, and feedback to support the Reports. In 2015 and 2016 course co-ordinators with an upcoming GYR were invited to the workshop. From 2017, the invitations were extended to all course co-ordinators of programmes requiring Annual Programme Reports.

2017 is the first year in which Graduating Year Reviews are submitted to CUAP that have been informed by the Annual Programme Reports. These GYRs will be submitted to CUAP in late October 2017, with CUAP to provide feedback by the end of the year.

In addition to the expected improvement in quality of GYRs, as a result of Annual Programme Reporting two programmes have been deleted and taken off the list of new programmes requiring a GYR.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Enhancement E6

Reference: Otago Portfolio page 56-60, 86; Guideline Statement GS 5.4 and 5.5

To redesign the Support Services section of the Student Opinion Survey to better reflect the current state of support services in the University and provide more targeted information for quality improvement.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

This element of the Student Opinion Survey, nowadays called the Support Services Improvement Survey (SSIS), is updated annually to reflect the latest state of provision of support services, following consultation with key stakeholders.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

The Support Services section of the Student Opinion Survey was extensively redesigned in 2017 to better reflect the current state of the provision of support services. The revised questionnaire ensures that relevant questions are asked of respondents based on their socio-demographic characteristics, enrolment status, geographical and campus location (see also the response to [Affirmation 4](#)).

The revised version of the questionnaire and reports arising from the responses received will provide more actionable and targeted information to the various offices and units providing support services for students. The questionnaire will likely need to be partially updated in 2018 following the implementation of the recommendations of the Support Services Review.

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Enhancement E7

Reference: Otago Portfolio page 57, 66, 86; Guideline Statement GS 5.5 and 6.3

To implement the new core course evaluation questions from the start of 2016 and produce a new suite of course evaluation summary reports for Heads of Department that will provide an overview of course evaluation results for their department.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

See the response to [Affirmation 5](#) for an update on the status of this Enhancement.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

In February 2016, the University implemented new core course evaluation questions as described in the response to [Affirmation 5](#). Plans are also in place for the production of a new summary report for Heads of Departments (also discussed in response to [Affirmation 5](#)).

University of Otago Cycle 5 Academic Audit

2020 Mid-cycle Report

Enhancement E8

Reference: Otago Portfolio page 74-79, 86; Guideline Statement GS 7.2

To undertake a review of master's by research programmes to explore resourcing, equity and quality matters.

2020 Report - Mid-cycle

The report of the review of Master's by research programmes was released in June 2017 but in light of the Support Services Review changes, implementation of the recommendations was put on hold while a new Shared Services structure bedded down. A Graduate Research Framework is now under development. This Framework provides an overarching structure for both doctoral and Master's thesis degrees at the University. This is an important first step in rationalising and standardising policy and processes for Master's research degrees. The structure has central oversight for Master's research degrees through the Graduate Research Committee. This shift away from Divisional oversight will facilitate the development of more standardised processes across the University. However, considerable work remains to implement key recommendations of the review.

2017 Report - One-year follow-up

In late 2016 a Working Party was appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) and the Dean of the Graduate Research School to review the University's Masters' by research programmes to explore resourcing, equity, and quality matters. In particular, the Working Party was asked to review, respond, and/or recommend actions on the following matters:

- Define what is meant by 'Masters' by research' programmes.
- Undertake a stocktake of current and planned Masters' by research programmes in the University, including regulations, governance and programme oversight systems that are used.
- Identify an overarching definition and set of common characteristics and graduate attributes that could be used to define all University Masters' by research programmes, and in particular to:
 - distinguish them from other Masters' and Honours programmes.
 - identify the relationships with and progression from undergraduate (Bachelors) taught programmes.

- Clearly identify the relationships and distinguishing characteristics between Masters' by research programmes and the University's Doctoral programmes, in particular the PhD.
- Recommend whether or not there should be a single, named University-wide Masters' by research degree programme.
- Assess and consider the impacts of variations in availability of departmental and academic division support for postgraduate research students, with particular reference to research Masters' students.
- Review pastoral, professional development, and career development support provisions for Masters' by research candidates, with attention to resourcing and equity issues, and recommend any changes that would assist the University achieve relevant goals set out in its *Research Action Plan*.
- Review the provision of scholarships and other financial support for students in Masters' by research programmes, with attention to resourcing and equity issues, and recommend any changes that would assist the University achieve relevant goals set out in its *Research Action Plan*.
- Recommend processes for administering Masters' by research programmes across the University, with particular focus on resourcing, equity and quality issues, which should include specific attention to:
 - recruitment and admission processes
 - supervision
 - progress reporting
 - examination and graduation processes
- Analyse the financial implications and financial sustainability of recommendations made under other components of these Terms of Reference.
- Any other relevant matters that may arise.

The Working Party report, released in June 2017, stated that:

There is nothing revolutionary nor perhaps unexpected in this Report or its recommendations. The Working Party has not uncovered any fundamental flaws with the University's definitions or procedures. It has refrained from creating a hierarchy of Masters' degrees or promoting the research Master's degree over the coursework degree.

It is hoped that the recommendations in the Report will set out a pathway to achieve a university-wide consistency in nomenclature with the intention of identifying the special character of the thesis component of research Masters' degrees. This would include better transparency and communication regarding the differentiation between the various types of Masters' degrees, not only to the University community, but especially to students and employers. It is hoped that the recommendations will help to articulate and raise the profile of existing graduate attributes (and encourage differentiation in the attributes of various Masters' degrees); encourage the establishment and maintenance of standardised University procedures for the administration of research Masters' degrees,

including an overarching University policy and centralised oversight of research Masters' degrees; and, finally, to improve access to support for research Masters' students.

There were 12 recommendations in line with the above commentary, and these are being considered at appropriate committees and boards for further action.