VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Cycle 5 Academic Audit
Mid-cycle audit report
13 November 2018

Introduction

Since the 2014 academic audit of Victoria University of Wellington, the University has grown in size and scale, with increased student numbers, expanded offerings and the completion of several major building projects supporting the quality and relevance of teaching and learning and the student experience. These changes, along with improvements to supporting systems and processes, have been guided by the University's Strategic Plan. This Plan is an ambitious commitment to be a world-leading capital city university and one of the great global-civic universities. The quality of the teaching, learning and student experience is one of the six primary strategies driving the University forward in its development. Within this context, an update against the University's Cycle 5 academic audit findings is timely.

This mid-cycle report summarises the progress made against the eight recommendations received at the time of the Cycle 5 audit as well as affirmations of activities underway in 2013–2014 when the self-review portfolio was prepared. Significant detail against the report's findings were provided in the University's update report provided to AQA in March 2016. This mid-cycle report provides an indicative self-assessment and details progress made since then

Overall, the University is pleased with its progress on most of these recommendations. There is more work to be done in some areas, as detailed below, but in all cases the University continues to take seriously its commitment to the audit findings and to quality assurance more generally.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: "The Panel recommends that the University gives priority to the systematic implementation of the Action Plan within its Vision and Strategy for Digital Learning and Teaching at Victoria 2012–2017, including development of feasible timelines, responsibilities and target objectives or stages."

Self-assessment: Broadly implemented. The University's experience with the 2012-2017 'Vision and Strategy' has informed updated plans for 2018-2021 which will underpin further digital developments.

The University has given priority to the 'Vision and Strategy for Digital Learning and Teaching' over the past 2-3 years, guided by the newly created position of Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Digital Futures). The 2012-2017 document helped drive advancements in the scale of adoption of digital tools in learning and teaching, and in the development of staff confidence and capability in using educational technology at Victoria.

As the lifecycle of the 2012-2017 document ended, a new document has been developed ('Vision and Strategy for Digital Learning and Teaching at Victoria 2018-2021'), furthering the University's aspirations for digital learning and teaching. Consistent with Recommendation 1, this new Vision and Strategy includes a detailed set of actions and a timeline for completion with associated

responsibilities overseen by a Governance Group. Experience with the previous 'Vision and Strategy' has confirmed that governance oversight and leadership from the faculties and operational units are essential organisational enablers for success in digital activities.

Related developments:

- Appointment of Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Digital Futures), November 2016.
- Clarification of governance and reporting lines. The 'Vision and Strategy' now articulates to the Learning and Teaching Committee, a sub-committee of the University's Academic Committee.
- Reorganisation of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) in 2018, integrating educational technology staff and capability previously located within Information Technology Services. This move is intended to strengthen links between pedagogy and technology within the University, supported by the creation of specific Learning Designer roles within CAD.
- Introduction of teaching and learning spaces designed for the digital age in the University's new science teaching and research building (Te Toki a Rata on the Kelburn Campus) and the redevelopment of Rutherford House (Pipitea Campus).
- Improvements to the lecture recording system rolled out across teaching spaces.
- Launch of four MOOCs on the edX platform, intended to develop internal capability and expertise with respect to digital courses.[1]
- New training and professional development opportunities for academic staff, aligned with the University's new Academic Careers Framework.
- Learning and teaching research grants are being made available to support staff with small projects to develop course offerings in line with the 'Vision and Strategy'.
- The University has recently participated for the first time in the Jisc/NUS "student digital experience tracker" – a survey of students' expectations and experiences of technology. The results are benchmarked across Australasia and the world.
- The University has developed a new micro-credential policy, reflecting recent NZQA decisions and adopted Universities New Zealand principles. The procedures to underpin this policy are currently being tested through a micro-credential pilot being undertaken by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in conjunction with the Centre for Lifelong Learning.
- Piloting of online exams planned for 2019.
- Development of a 'Digital Roadmap' involving input from key staff across the University to fully understand and prioritise developments in this area over the next three years.

Recommendation 2: "The Panel recommends the University give priority to completing the Course Information Project and the review of academic advice in order to enhance the quality, reliability and consistency of academic advising across the University."

Self-assessment: Partially implemented. Further work planned 2018-2020.

As noted at the time of the 2016 update report, the Course Information Project had been commenced but was delayed due to technical difficulties. This Project has since been subsumed into the Student Services Transformation Programme (SSTP), a major University-wide programme of work taking an holistic view across all the University's student services. The programme's intention is

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[1] www.victoria.ac.nz/about/global-engagement/edx-victoria

to improve how students and staff experience and engage with Victoria University of Wellington services, ensuring they are consistent and seamless and meet student and staff expectations. One major workstream within the SSTP is "Student Success" which includes the implementation of a system called CRM Advise and analytics capability to support student success.

Related developments:

- The University introduced a Client Relationship Management tool (CRM) to manage and create visibility of student interactions with the University. This system holds all their prospective and enrolment information in one place. In early-2019, this workstream will complete its roll-out across 22 teams incorporating Student Academic Services, Faculties and Schools.
- The online Course Finder has improved the visibility and consistency of course information for students in recent years, alongside now centrally maintained programme information on the University's website and improved subject area webpages for prospective students. A revised 'Planning Your Studies' section of the website, supported by the central Contact Centre, provides access to a suite of publications and to online or phone bookings of course planning sessions.
- The University is actively exploring the introduction of a Curriculum Management System (CMS) that would improve the accuracy, consistency and timeliness of curriculum information across the University, from the time of development through to academic approval and dissemination across the University's website, timetable, Calendar and other publications. Subject to the selection of an appropriate vendor, it is anticipated that a CMS could be functional by the end of 2020.

Recommendation 3: "The Panel recommends that the University develops a high-level benchmarking statement which sets out the objectives and potential strategies whereby staff might assure themselves that programmes, curricula and assessment are benchmarked to prevailing national and international standards."

Self-assessment: Partially implemented.

The University's commitment to benchmarking has continued to evolve since the last update report. Benchmarking activity is guided by the Strategic Plan's Enabling Strategy 2 that the University "attain the scale, quality and academic profile of leading public universities".[2] This strategy cascades to the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy / Te Rautaki Maruako 2017–2021[3] and its accompanying Implementation Plan, for example the expectation that "all courses and/or assessments are regularly reviewed to reflect ongoing advances in pedagogically informed technology".

To date, the University focused on embedding appropriate benchmarking expectations and practice *within* the areas mentioned in the recommendation i.e. programmes, curricula and assessment, rather than development of an expanded overarching statement. Academic programme and various accreditation reviews are the major vehicles for this work, alongside robust course design practices, and pre- and post-assessment moderation procedures. This approach will then be examined to determine whether there remains a need for an expanded high-level statement to guide the various strands of benchmarking activity underway.

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[2] www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/university-publications/strategic-plan2/strategic-plan.pdf
[3] www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/strategies/learning-teaching-strategy.pdf

Related developments:

- The University's academic programmes undergo review every seven years. These reviews involve academics from other New Zealand and overseas universities. A revised academic programme reviews policy and accompanying procedures have recently been considered by Academic Committee and published as draft for wider consultation. The proposed revision requires that benchmarking be included either in the self-review document or as a separate document for the review panel. The accompanying revised guidelines will provide details for schools and programmes about how this can be achieved.
- Moderation policies and practices have been an important focus for the University in 2018 (see also below, *Recommendation 4*). As part of this, the important role played by honours and Master's degree external assessors has been highlighted in a revision of the *Assessment Handbook* (April 2018).[4]
- The Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-Learning (ACODE) provides an important benchmark of the University's support of technology for learning and teaching in collaboration with other Australian and New Zealand universities.[5] The Acting Director of the Centre for Academic Development is the 2018-19 president of ACODE.
- In 2018, Victoria University of Wellington joined the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium for the first time, allowing the University to compare its students' experiences to that of students across the world.[6]

Recommendation 4: "The Panel recommends that the University reviews the mechanisms used by staff to moderate undergraduate assessment tasks, expectations and standards with an objective of identifying, developing and sharing good practice and formulating some principles for moderation."

Self-assessment: Implemented. New procedures in place.

Following a stocktake of moderation practices in 2017-2018, the University's Academic Committee, supported by the Academic Office, reviewed the moderation provisions in the University's Assessment Handbook. Committee discussions led to a revision of the Handbook's moderation requirements to encourage good practice. While allowing for discipline variance, the Handbook now articulates University-wide statements on pre-assessment and post-assessment moderation along with a requirement that all faculties prepare a detailed Moderation Procedure. These procedures are to be submitted to the University's Academic Committee for approval and monitoring.

Most faculties now have approved moderation procedures with the remaining faculties expected to submit before the end of 2018. The consideration of the draft moderation procedures has already provided significant opportunities for the sharing of good practice within and between faculties. Moderation mechanisms remain an ongoing topic for discussion at Faculty Boards and University Academic Committee. As mentioned above, expectations of appropriate moderation mechanisms have been reinforced in the revised academic programme review policy.

Recommendation 5: "The Panel recommends the responsibility for overall quality assurance of programmes offered overseas, including teaching quality and learning outcomes, is part of the quality assurance portfolio of the DVC (Academic) (or successor role) in order to ensure oversight

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[4] www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf
[5] www.acode.edu.au/
[6] www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support/admin/student-experience

of the processes used to achieve equivalence as well as to ensure cultural needs and constraints are provided for.”

Self-assessment: Substantially implemented. Further enhancements to be made.

While the University's offshore teaching arrangements remain relatively few in number, since the 2014 academic audit the University has sought to strengthen further its quality assurance of these activities. This is facilitated through the portfolio of the Vice-Provost (Academic) which includes responsibility for both the Academic Office and Victoria International, as well as teaching and learning outcomes.

Related developments:

- As noted in the response to *Recommendation 3*, the University is currently finalising a revised academic programmes review policy and accompanying guidelines. New terms of reference for regular academic programme reviews makes clearer to schools and programme staff, and panels, that programmes offered overseas are to be included in Academic Programme Reviews.
- To provide a greater overview of offshore activities, a 'Memorandum of Understanding' SharePoint Site has been created bringing together all the 800+ national and international agreements in place across the various schools and institutes of the University. While only a fraction of these agreements involves overseas teaching, this site has increased visibility of the number and diversity of arrangements in place.
- A revised template for offshore offerings has recently been developed, aligned with CUAP expectations. This new template is designed to increase the internal focus on quality assurance, while making it easier for academic staff to engage in the process.

While the above progress has been positive, the University remains alert for the need for a suitable level of oversight. Associate Deans have recently been reminded of the need to ensure offshore teaching arrangements have the appropriate quality assurance arrangements in place for current and emerging offerings; follow-up work is planned for 2019 to ensure that this is the case.

Recommendation 6: “The Panel recommends that the University gives priority to its Enhancement Initiative No. 7, to develop an academic integrity strategy which addresses, in a systematic way, prevention, detection and management of academic misconduct and which includes the development of good practice examples of academic integrity education and identification of good assessment practices which minimise opportunity for plagiarism.”

Self-assessment: Partially implemented. Work underway 2018-2019.

In 2018, the University undertook a stocktake of academic integrity across the University. The intention of the stocktake was to develop an holistic understanding of matters relating to academic integrity, including both research integrity and integrity in relation to teaching and learning for both staff and students. In addition to detailing the University's current policies and guidelines in relation to academic and research integrity, key questions providing the framework for the stocktake were:

- What training and guidance is available in relation to academic integrity and research integrity for academic staff, students and professional staff?
- What are the current systems for monitoring, reporting and recording breaches of academic and research integrity?

- What are examples of good practice in promoting and monitoring academic and research integrity within Victoria?
- What are the areas of greatest concern/risk in relation to the maintenance of academic and research integrity at Victoria?
- What are the policies and practices of other universities in Australasia and UK in relation to academic and research integrity?
- How well do the policies and practices within the University support an holistic concept of academic integrity?

The results of the stocktake have resulted in work to develop an holistic Academic Integrity Framework. Stage one is a workshop with the Provost Group (staff reporting to the Provost) scheduled for November 2018. This will be followed by a Provost Forum on the topic at Academic Board in early-2019.This piece of work is also being informed by practices in other universities, in Australasia. While progress has taken longer than originally anticipated, the University is excited by this piece of work and the anticipated transformative impact it will have on lifting understanding and associated policies and monitoring systems consistent with international good practice. The University is committed to implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 7: "The Panel recommends that the University gives urgent attention to implementation of the system initiated in 2014 to require course outlines to include feedback to students regarding the outcomes and actions taken as a consequence of responses from course evaluations."

Self-assessment: Implemented.

The University is now in its second year of online course evaluations which has improved the timeliness of the evaluation of course feedback. A revised template for course outlines includes a requirement to report to students regarding the outcomes and actions taken due to responses from course evaluations. Current and prospective students are also able to read feedback summaries for the last evaluation of a course.[7]

While the 2014 recommendation has been implemented, ensuring the closing of the student feedback loop is an ongoing task for the University and further improvements are likely. Pleasingly, the latest "Your Voice" staff survey (2018) confirmed that 80% of teaching staff agreed with the statement "I am encouraged to evaluate my teaching". This is above the benchmark for all Australasian universities involved in the survey.

Recommendation 8: "The Panel recommends that the University develop a protocol within thesis progress reporting processes that ensures that individual issues are managed confidentially and effectively, but which also provides an avenue for centralised notification of issues which might be serious, systemic or point to problems with University processes."

[Associated Affirmation 7: "The Panel affirms the University's review of progress reporting of doctoral and master's research. It encourages the University to articulate its resultant expectations about acceptable procedure and use of reports within the Doctoral Policy and also encourages the University to incorporate institutional monitoring of potential trends and issues which might be systemic either within a school or faculty, or across the institution."]

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[7] www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php

Self-assessment: Partially implemented. Subject to ongoing discussion and refinement.

Progress reporting for doctoral students has been an on-line process since mid-2016. With some minor adjustments to the content, the Candidate Development Plan (developed in 2014) continues to be used for progress reporting. Further adjustments will be made in coming months after a recent discussion at the Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR) Board. Master's thesis students still use a paper-based system. Ideally this would also be available in an on-line platform, but to date there has not been the capacity for the development work required.

Within the doctoral progress reports, students have an opportunity to note any issues regarding their candidature that may be unresolved and any other "significant matters". These are recorded within the context of the progress meeting with their supervisory team with the goal of encouraging open dialogue. Such issues are expected to be addressed within the school or faculty as appropriate; issues that cannot be so addressed are escalated to the Dean FGR.

It remains true that students can be reluctant to raise issues in their progress reports – much preferring to talk face to face with a neutral party (such as the VUWSA Student Advocate who plays an important role for many students). While options for providing for a confidential section within the progress reports have been explored on several occasions, this has not been universally supported. Associate Deans (Postgraduate Research) note concerns about compromising the transparency of the reporting process and the difficulties in maintaining the confidentiality for the complainant. This remains an ongoing discussion.

Students are advised (at induction, via the website, or as a result of discussion with staff members) of the University processes for raising matters of concern - at an individual or lower level first, then if necessary progressing through school or faculty level - and where they will find support to address issues. The University is conscious, however, that it cannot be assumed that doctoral students are always fully aware of the Doctoral Policy and related processes. Completion of the progress reports is monitored within the FGR, and procedures are in place to ensure greater responsiveness on the part of both candidates and supervisors. A recent initiative of the Dean FGR, directly contacting students who have not completed a progress report, has provided an opportunity for students to raise issues that they had been unable or unwilling to address via the progress reports.

A comprehensive review of the Doctoral Policy completed after the 2016 academic audit update clarified the need to ensure clear and consistent policy, procedures and guideline documents. The suggestion contained in A7, that the University "articulate its … expectations about acceptable procedures … within the Doctoral Policy" will be addressed in the revision of procedural documents that is currently underway. New Master's Thesis Regulations (replacing the previous Master's Thesis Policy) were approved by Academic Board in September 2018.

Recommendation*: **"The Panel recommends that the University develops a formal delegations schedule to identify where specific authorities for academic decisions lie and ensures that this schedule is accessible to all staff."**

* This recommendation appeared in the body of the report and was unnumbered.

Self-assessment: Implemented.

While this was not a formal recommendation, the University has made significant progress against this in-text recommendation. A new Delegations Statute was approved, effective 1 January 2017: www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/finance/delegations-statute.pdf

In addition, an online searchable database is available on the University's public website, detailing delegations across eight categories: governance, academic, students, research, human resources, finance and procurement, contracts, and resources and assets: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/delegations/delegations-schedule-search-tool

Affirmations

In addition to the above recommendations, the 2014 Cycle 5 Academic Audit report affirmed several of the University's initiatives underway at the time of the audit. The following provides a short update against each of these affirmations.

Affirmation 1: "The Panel affirms the University's efforts to improve integration of the four Wellington sites in terms of providing physical environments and facilities which are comparable but also address discipline-specific needs."

Consideration of access, equity and discipline needs across the University's multiple sites is a complex and ongoing task for the University. Since the 2014 academic audit, the Karori Campus has closed, leaving the University with three main sites (Kelburn, Te Aro and Pipitea) along with staff and teaching space in Wellington Hospital, the Miramar Creative Centre, the Coastal Ecology Laboratory in Island Bay and premises in Auckland. In 2017, the University approved a new Campus Master Plan to support investment in the University's multi-site infrastructure in a manner that is fit for purpose, flexible, connected, attractive, welcoming, safe and responsible.

Notwithstanding recent building developments – including a new Biological Sciences block (Te Toki a Rata building) on the Kelburn Campus, the extension of Rutherford House on the Pipitea campus, and a multi-year upgrade underway on the Te Aro campus – there is an ongoing requirement for the University to develop its facilities to meet growth and to respond to functionality changes and quality expectations across all sites. A current focus is addressing deferred and seismic maintenance to enable the University to meet market demand for its programmes. In September 2018, construction work on the "KPod building" commenced on the Kelburn Campus. The KPod will provide much needed relocation space during new construction and refurbishment projects, and overflow space for groups experiencing growth.

Affirmation 2: "The Panel affirms the University's work in preparing for the management of a significant disruption to its activities, and for steps taken to facilitate business continuity. It endorses the maintenance of an off-site back-up data centre."

As detailed in the 2016 update report, the University continues to pay close attention to business continuity and emergency management. These systems were tested in the Kaikoura earthquake that occurred shortly after midnight on Monday 14 November 2016. As noted at the time, the University re-opened most of its facilities by Tuesday and was able to provide emergency accommodation for many displaced students and neighbours. The resumption of learning and teaching underway in Trimester 3 was aided by the requirement in place from 2016 that all courses have a minimum online presence "to ensure students have a consistent experience and ready access to key course information, materials and resources" (updated Programme and Course Design Handbook).[8]

Like several other buildings in the Wellington Region, the University's Rankine Brown building sustained damage to lift cores during this earthquake. Following an emergency response to protect

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[8] www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/governance/programme-and-course-design-handbook.pdf

the lift cores, a Detailed Seismic Assessment was undertaken to inform repairs to the lift cores and other building elements damaged or requiring upgrade to achieve the University's minimum 67 percent NBS (New Building Standard) score. This staged work commenced in February 2018. Alongside other building decisions affecting the Science and Engineering physical spaces, a replacement options for the Cotton Server are being explored has been identified and is programmed to be in place and available for ITS fit-out from late February 2019.

Affirmation 3: "The Panel affirms the University's development of e-portfolios as a tool for students to record and evaluate their own progress towards acquiring graduate attributes, and supports the University's efforts to encourage academic staff to incorporate use of e-portfolios into their teaching and learning approaches."

ePortfolio is a CareerHub tool where students, staff and graduates have free access to an e-portfolio to store, reflect on and share their skills, achievements and experiences. The e-Portfolio are used in a variety of ways across the University, for example by the Victoria Plus Programme (the University's service and leadership award), students who completed an Overseas Exchange and students and staff reflecting on their studies and extracurricular activities to recognise and better articulate their professional development in interviews. Resources and workshops are available to support students, staff and graduates. However, changes over the past couple of years in CareerHub product provision will require the University to explore options for e-portfolio tools in the near future.

Affirmation 4: "The Panel affirms the University on the development of its overarching Student Retention Plan and Student Retention Implementation Plan, and on the systematic reporting of achievements related to equity groups targeted by the Plans."

The Student Retention Plan and Retention Implementation Plan were linked to the former Strategic Plan. Retention-directed efforts continue at an operational level while a new "Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework", aligned with the current Strategic Plan, has recently been developed. Action plans to sit under this Framework are currently under development. *Refer also Recommendation 2 (new student success workstream underway).*

Māori student and Pasifika student access, retention and completion data are reported regularly to Academic Board and to Council. The University places strong emphasis on monitoring and early intervention. The University is actively participating in the AQA Cycle 6 Enhancement Theme to enhance access, outcomes and opportunity for Māori students and for Pasifika students. As part of this piece of work, the University has undertaken a comprehensive review of "Targeted Māori and Pasifika Student Interventions" across the institution. Following extensive consultation during 2018, a new model for Māori and Pasifika recruitment, advice and support staff will be in place from 1 January 2019. This will combine many of the existing Māori student and Pasifika student support services into a more coherent, accessible and accountable structure that provides for specific, culturally responsive support appropriate to the different student cohorts.

Affirmation 5: "The Panel affirms the University's introduction of the Course Signals system and encourages a systematic evaluation of its effectiveness from the perspective of both the University and its students."

A pilot of the 'course signals' system was completed in 2016. Following evaluation, work on this project was subsumed into the broader SSTP "student success" workstream (*refer recommendation 2*).

Affirmation 6: "The Panel affirms the University's approach to staff induction, including the pre-arrival advice and online modules and the use of evidence-based resources for new academic staff."

The University remains mindful of the importance of staff induction and continues to acknowledge the challenges to provide timely, generic and tailored induction to new employees, both Academic and Professional. Work in different academic areas, aligned with the Academic Orientation Review (AOR) Steering Groups' recommendations, continues to target and address academic induction.

Progress:

- In May 2017 a new Victoria Academic Career Framework/Ngā Paearu Akorangi was completed. This framework captures the aspirations of the Strategic Plan and encompasses the University's core ethical values of respect, responsibility, fairness, integrity and empathy. It is used for classifying and describing academic positions, for formulating selection, promotion and development criteria, for assessments and making decisions. This framework is a point-of-reference for induction.
- The Victoria Early Career Academic Programme (VECAP) was launched in April 2017 to support and develop new academic staff.
- The 'Review of Tutoring at Victoria University of Wellington: Report to Senior Leadership Team' was completed in April 2017, which, in part, informed the University Staff Systems Project Business Case (see below). A new Tutors Policy was approved by Academic Board in August 2018.
- A new individual Staff Excellence award, Te Rautaki Maruako Tutor Excellence Award, was introduced as a result of funding made available by a Victoria University of Wellington staff members. Ten tutors were recognised for their outstanding tutoring contribution to learning and teaching at Victoria University this year.
- Work has also progressed in terms of the Head of School Project. Following significant consultation, Head of School, School Manager and Deputy Head of School roles have been redefined, and revised role descriptions have been drafted for each role. A Head of School Professional Development Programme was piloted in 2017 and implemented in 2018. The Head of School induction toolkit, 'Heads Up' has been piloted with new Heads of School and will be completed before the end of 2018.
- The University has undertaken to invest in the progressive automation of HR processes. A staged implementation of Oracle Corporation's Human Capital Management system is intended so that functions operate with redesigned workflows, and information is captured at source, without duplication, for use across the University.
- The University Staff Systems Project Business Case was approved 6 June 2018. The aim is to use technology to help improve recruitment and induction (Stage 1); in particular, with temporary staff such as with Tutors in the first stage.

Affirmation 7: refer Recommendation 8