Te Korowai Kahurangi: Analysis of 2018 Degree Monitor's Reports & Action Plan

This analysis is based on and limited to Monitors' Reports and Responses from 2018. It therefore does not acknowledge recommendations already acted upon, or wider initiatives occurring.

Number of reports read: 24 covering 34 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.[1]

Number of PAQC responses to reports read: 10/24[2]

Number of programmes paused, being taught out or ended: 12/34[3]

Commendations

- The majority of monitor's reports are of a very high quality, offering Unitec programmes excellent independent critique and constructive suggestions for continuing improvement. They made observations of real breadth and depth in terms of teaching and learning, systems and quality. Genuine engagement with their input promises greater rigour in our teaching and learning, for the benefit of all stakeholders.
- BSPT teaching staff were particularly commended by their monitor for their commitment to innovation, quality of responsive relationships with stakeholders and work with Dr Curtis Barlow on a frame from Te Ao Māori for their teaching.

Concerns

- In the monitor's reports for MComp, PGDipComp, BCS, GDC, and BCons little attention was paid to pedagogical approach, learning design elements, engagement with priority groups and wider stakeholders. Recommendations are pragmatic rather than diagnostic, and do not always arise from previous discussion. Follow-through on response to recommendations is cursory or has been lacking.
- The low number of PAQC responses to monitor's reports received by Te Korowai Kahurangi raises questions about our attention to and engagement in processes of self-assessment and/or our means of recording it. Of the responses received some avoid direct engagement with recommendations and/or fail to put a due date on actions, suggesting that greater ownership of improvement is needed – and training for that? – and means for accountability need strengthening.
- A number of monitors noted that processes, particularly of external moderation have not been occurring as regularly as they should. In two cases external monitoring has been particularly lax – 2018 being the first incidence ever of external monitoring for the ten-year operational GDHE and the first since 2013 for the BBS, PGDipBus and MBus. Generally, external monitoring visits have been two-yearly. Our policy since 2018 requires yearly monitor's visits.
- Several monitors note the need still – in the second half of 2018 – for attention to be paid to priority students, especially Māori and Pacific and their communities.

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[1] As of 19 February 2019 monitor's reports had not been received by Te Korowai Kahurangi for five programmes: Masters in Landscape Architecture, Masters of Architectural Practice, Bachelor of Architectural Studies (monitor's visits occurring in October and December) and Masters of Design and Masters of Creative Practice (monitor's visits occurring in December). They were going to PAQCs and HoSs at the time of writing.

[2] This was the number in Te Korowai Kahurangi's files at the time of writing.

[3] These include the Master of Applied Practice suite – all but Social Practice and Accounting (which is to change to a Master of Professional Accounting), Master of Educational Management, Master of Social Practice, Master of International Communication, PGDip International Communication, Bachelors of International Communication, Doctor of Computing, Bachelor of Health and Social Development, Bachelor of Sport (a Diploma replaces it), Bachelor of Applied Science (Human Biology), Master of Osteopathy, Graduate Diploma of Higher Education.

Looking ahead: From the monitor's reports

- There is inconsistency in the existence and activity of programme advisory committees at undergraduate and postgraduate level. This weakens the ability of Unitec and its programmes to respond to changes in industry and community and thus remain current, relevant and "community-focused." Ensuring Māori and Pacific representation on those committees is urgent.
- While Unitec has paused, closed enrolments for or disestablished many of its postgraduate offerings from 2019 onwards, a number of issues identified in monitor's reports should be grappled with to ensure the quality of those postgraduate programmes that remain. These include:
    - Consistency in standards and student experience. The monitor for the MAP suite noted differences in quality of assessment design and practice, student support and reporting, and recommended structural centralisation to address this. Is it worth creating a means for across-School consistency in standards and student experience at postgraduate level?
    - Research Ethics. It was noted that the turnaround of ethics applications has been so slow that some projects were not even bothering to apply. It was not explained whether supervisors then asked students to change their methodology or projects dared to proceed anyway. This situation holds potential danger for Unitec if not addressed.
    - Quality of Supervision. Supervision requires research outputs, which require financial and time commitment. Workload and stretched budgets, alongside a need for proactivity and imagination in what and how to produce those outputs, need attention if postgraduate programmes are to retain, even grow, credibility and capacity for research supervision.
- A recommendation to establish, cultivate and build alumni networks is reiterated across a number of monitor's reports, partly as a way to populate advisory committees but also for the sake of tracking and supporting graduate outcomes, and of connecting with employers and possible placements/internships.
- The lack of programme-specific marketing is mentioned in several degree monitor's reports as being of real concern in terms of putting Unitec's distinctive contribution and particular strengths 'out there' to enable targeted recruitment, grow enrolments and ensure the viability of programmes (eg BAT, BPSA, BSPT, BHSD).[4] The BSPT monitor in their October report in fact advised that they invest in internal marketing initiatives, noting however the pressure this would place on time and resources. Others are already doing this. The monitor of the BHSD suggests that a previous recommendation they made for targeted marketing, which was not acted upon, may have contributed to its closure.
- Where students are able to study independently and off-campus, their access to support services and the library online needs considered attention by programme leaders for the sake of equity.
- Monitors of degrees offered on the Waitakere campus (BNurs, BHSD) record that availability of study space – especially for group assignments where talking is integral to the work – and support services is an equity issue that hampers Waitakere from being as "student-centred" as it should be.
- The monitor of the BAS particularly noted receiving very negative comment from students on the state of their classrooms and outdated equipment affecting their study, expressing concern that "word will get out." BPSA is suffering from outdated equipment and technology. What plan is possible for updating resources from here?[5]

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[4] There is danger in ITP sector reform that original Unitec contribution to particular forms of training could be lost if we cannot proactively and clearly tell programme-specific stories across our offerings.
[5] In Programme Evaluations other Schools (Architecture and Creative Industries) also noted concerns around resourcing.

- Clear communication is needed around the status and resourcing of programmes in development or proposed going forward, as well as those paused in the interim or being taught-out in order to address anxiety and loyalty in students, staff and wider stakeholders.[6]
- The monitor of the GDHE queried the ongoing strategy of Unitec in terms of supporting and requiring the development of teacher capability. The GDHE has suffered a degree of neglect over the years; teacher competencies are still in development; quality assurance is not clear. What is Unitec's commitment, expectations and timeframe in this?

Recommendations:
- Te Korowai Kahurangi seek new monitors for Computer Science and Construction, ensuring that they are experienced in deep analysis of teaching and learning, student experience and stakeholder engagement.
- External Moderation and monitoring plans be lodged each year with PAQCs and Te Korowai Kahurangi and their adherence, including PAQC response where appropriate, closely tracked. Where needed, training should be offered to PAQCS in SMART response to recommendations.
- Heads of Schools lead their teams in paying particular attention to priority students, especially Māori and Pacific, in 2019, exploring pedagogies and cultural understandings to (further) support their learning.
- All degree programmes be required to have current, active, representative – including Māori and Pacific – advisory committees, and accountability in this be closely monitored until their engagement is embedded.
- The QAB investigate means for ensuring consistency in standards and student support across postgraduate programmes, and commission Tūāpapa Rangahau to audit supervision challenges in Schools and recommend initiatives to address those.
- The Research Ethics Committee review its processes toward ensuring prompt turnaround of ethics applications, especially for students operating on a limited timeframe. Offer a service to students prior to application to help them present a rigorous application first time around.
- Schools work proactively with the Alumni Office to support Alumni Connect, the new initiative to build a Unitec Alumni network.
- That Unitec revisit, or, if this has been done already, affirm its marketing policy to invest in the telling of programme specific stories that highlight the uniqueness of our offerings and their value add to graduate pathways.
- Support services lead an investigation into equity of student experience across Mt Albert and Waitakere campuses, and face-to-face and online, and instigate improvement initiatives, particularly in regard to access to study spaces, classroom resourcing, support services and the library.
- A transparent-as-possible and collaborative culture be further cultivated around the status and resourcing of programmes for the sake of good relationship.
- Expectations of teacher competency going forward be clearly communicated by Academic Board and rigorously resourced by Te Puna Ako.

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[6] The monitor for the PGDipCouns noted as urgent the development of the Masters in Narrative Practice (students must have a minimum two years postgraduate study to receive accreditation as a professional Counsellor), as did the monitor for the Business offerings. Monitors of programmes being taught out noted the stress to students and, where new programmes are being brought in, the workload stress on staff.