

Āta-tuhi: Te Korowai Kahurangi Analysis of the 2019 End of Year PEP Process

23 March 2020

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to

- provide evaluative commentary on the 2019 End of Year Programme Evaluation and Planning (PEP) process – Āta-kōrero and Analysis
- make recommendations for continuing improvement in the work of growing capability in programme evaluation

Executive Summary

With PEPs currently happening half-yearly there is continual opportunity for improvement in the process. Recommendations made in the analysis of the 2019 Interim PEPs were actioned in the preparation for the 2019 End of Year PEP season, which occurred across late November 2019 – early February 2020 led by fourteen trained facilitators. PEP Analysis occurred in March in a work of Mahi Kotahitanga between Te Korowai Kahurangi and Te Puna Ako. Thirteen recommendations are made toward the continuing improvement of our capability in programme evaluation.

Preparation

The timings agreed by the Quality Alignment Board for the End of Year PEPs were that the Āta-kōrero period would be from 2 December 2019 through to 7 February 2020, and reports would be due 21 February 2020. These dates and the template were sent to APMs and HOSs on 31st October. Mid-February the deadline for the reports was extended to 4 March due to the significantly increased workload of academic staff caused by Covid-19.

The PEP template remained very similar to that of the 2018 End of Year report, upon request, with just some sharpened wording occurring to encourage evaluative commentary. A shortened template requiring only KEQs 1, 4, 5 and 6 was sent to programmes teaching out or expiring.

Training in Āta-kōrero facilitation was developed. Video and audio material was recorded from the Kaihautū tracing the link between Āta, facilitation and Te Noho Kotahitanga contributing key teaching material to a short course published in Moodle. Twelve people went through the training – four from Te Korowai Kahurangi, two from Te Puna Ako, and three Academic Programme Managers, and three senior staff from six Schools. A request had gone out from QAB to Schools to send one or two people for this training but the time of year was difficult. Three of the twelve trainees completed paperwork as the original design plan was for it to be a badge. This did not proceed but the question remains how to credit academic staff in particular who undertook this training and then gave 15-60 hours of their time to Unitec in this work.

In November **an article** detailing the development of Āta-kōrero – a unique application of Āta into educational evaluation – was submitted to *He Take Tō Te Aromatawai: Evaluation Matters*, the journey of the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluators Association for their July 2020 issue. Co-written by Toni Rewiri, Veraneeca Taiepa and Rosemary Dewerse it was reviewed by Merran Davis and Simon Nash before being sent. The article has been accepted after blind peer review.

As promised in the previous report, **two bite-sized resources for teams were created** using powerpoint: an animated one sent to Academic Programme Managers for programme teams regarding how to prepare for Āta-kōrero; and a plain one sent to PAQC Chairs to guide their

committee through review of reports. It was discovered that not all teams received the former and when they did, not all staff looked at it. Amongst positive feedback, some was received that the animation proceeded too fast and the expectation explained in the content was too high. Notably not all PAQCs employed Rubric 2 in their work, as asked for in their resource; how many accessed or found it useful is unknown.

Work continued on **the Dashboards**. A new one detailing use of Student Support Services was added to the information teams received. Two problems would impact on effective utilisation of data: in most teams only the APM (and not often the Programme Coordinator or Discipline Leader) had access to PowerBI for up-to-date information; and for teams meeting before Christmas with results being updated every day, the provision of a paper report could not keep pace with the changes. As a direct result of this experience work has been put into purchasing PowerBI licences for all fixed-term and permanent staff. These are expected late March 2020 and training will be offered to teams in how to find and interrogate data. While we wait, the Dashboards overall are being reorganised to make their use intuitive and efficient for users.

Āta-kōrero: Evaluative Conversations

Sixty Āta-kōrero were booked in and delivered by fourteen facilitators – the twelve trained, a previously experienced facilitator from Te Puna Ako and Rosemary Dewerse (lead facilitator). They occurred from 20 November until 5 February. Language Studies teams booked in one-three days with the aim of writing their PEP together; most teams set aside three-four hours for evaluative conversation with the report written subsequently.

New facilitators observed an experienced facilitator (of which not many were available initially) before heading into co- or solo facilitation. Where possible two facilitators were scheduled to work with large (often degree) teams in case the option to split into small groups was desirable.

In the July-August (Interim 2019) Āta-kōrero programme teams were invited to their workshops by their AAQs but we were told people had not received the invitation. This time Michelle Sun in Te Korowai Kahurangi's Quality Systems team organised all invitations and documents, including a GoogleDocs version of the template for live note-taking were attached to those. We discovered, however, that not all staff use Outlook Calendar, and even of staff who did, not all had read the material.

This time note-takers were provided by the team – ideally the person to write the report. Not all teams were prepared for this, nor all note-takers experienced in listening for evaluative commentary. Also, not all note-takers took notes in the online template or “live” in front of the staff, thereby making it more difficult to link the conversation with the report.

With most teams experiencing Āta-kōrero twice – three times for the fifteen who were part of the March 2019 pilot – participation this time around generally was good, though seven teams struggled to get teachers to attend and either had to reschedule or ran with few people present. We discovered that not all teams regularly meet and thus have a culture of evaluative conversation (Āta-kōrero) – something that would enable a more effective facilitated summative one. Further, concern grew among the facilitators that poor quality conversation does not provide useful material for effective reporting. Most teams we noticed did not come well-prepared for evaluation; it was good to see a few bringing CEPs to their workshop. Meanwhile, in the teams that have been involved since the pilot – or regularly in evaluative conversation over time, like Bridgepoint – the quality of discussion continues to improve.

This time around we hoped to bring Te Noho Kotahitanga more to the fore. The need to focus on the KEQs (which we often had to teach to teams) and use of NZQA's Rubric 1 for rating (Excellent/Good/Marginal/Poor), however, accompanied by ongoing ignorance of our values among some staff, made it difficult to achieve. This remains a challenge though we wonder whether more coherence in our PEP template might make a difference.

Three writing workshops were offered at the end of the Āta-kōrero season, attended by around twenty APMs and Programme Coordinators. The latter were a surprise; no DG-Email list existed for inviting them, yet obviously a number were responsible for this piece of work. Upon reflection, there is much more support needed to ensure these leaders are confident about the expectations and their ability to write to them.

Reflecting on our operating of the PEP season, its timing is problematic. Those teams that met before the summer break did not have finalised data (as noted); those teams meeting after often had staff on leave. Meanwhile, eight weeks of facilitation was a long and sustained period to resource; the four weeks of 2019's Interim PEP season were too intense. Meanwhile, the commitment to providing an invested outsider-facilitator is generally welcomed by teams – partly for the dissemination of best practice and concern. Yet more facilitators and a broader, understood culture of Āta-kōrero is needed if we are going to be able to resource this work and ensure people's time is well-spent.

Analysis

A combined team of ten staff from Te Korowai Kahurangi and Te Puna Ako joined together to analyse seventy-four reports covering ninety-four programmes at Unitec (at the time of writing eight reports for eight programmes remained outstanding). The team had eight working days to complete the analysis.

NZQA's Rubric 2: Criteria for Rating Capability in Self-Assessment was used. The team spent the first day discussing proposed Unitec definitions of 'Excellent', which were published as guidelines by which we all operated, and then peer moderating two PEP reports to test and set our standard. Unitec's 'Excellent' drew from expectations already existing in the PEP template, mindful of the evaluative requirements of the Āta-kōrero. Beyond this, as individuals analysed reports, pairs and small groups met for informal peer moderation, and there was one more meeting of the whole group part-way through to peer moderate the PEPs of programmes nominated for the IER, and to evaluate the process and emerging results to that point. There was no opportunity to meet at the end for a final, thorough, whole-group moderation.

We rated the evaluative capability **as evidenced in the report writing** for each of the 6 KEQs, the SMART goals, and the PAQC review, before offering an averaged overall rating for each PEP report – judged qualitatively, not quantitatively. The team's self-rating for the 6 KEQs using NZQA's Rubric 1: Criteria for Rating Educational Performance, as well as their Best Practice and Major Concerns were also recorded. Justification for the analyst's ratings was written as qualitative feedback to the team. This was all recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, with programme ratings (the team's and the analyst's) and an overall summary of the evaluative commentary, Best Practice and Major Concerns noted on a front School-level page.

Within the process it proved challenging to distance ourselves from what we knew of programme activity and the quality of Āta-kōrero that some of us facilitated to focus purely on the quality of the evaluative writing before us. Overall, 67% of the ratings that we gave were 'Poor' or 'Marginal'. We were strongest in our evaluation of KEQ1: Student Achievement (60% received Excellent or Good).

62-75% of PEPs received Marginal or Poor for KEQs2-4, however, mainly because consistency in presenting evidence-based feedback loops toward continuing improvement was weak. A suggestion was received favourably by the team that it might be wise in the next reporting round to offer scaffolded guidance throughout the template for writers to help improve their work overall.

A noticeable area of weakness was PAQC review. We gave 69% Marginal or Poor (7% of reports did not offer a PAQC review). Often this was because, despite the resource sent out, PAQC's reviewed reports according to Performance rather than Capability in Self-Assessment. We would recommend face-to-face training be offered, at the least to PAQC Chairs. And we wonder – to ensure rigour – if PEPs should be reviewed a different PAQC to enable an objective eye and avoid conflict of interest when writers are in the room.

Concern about the impact on morale of 'Poor' and 'Marginal' ratings led to requesting a meeting with the Heads of Schools to ask for their sense of best process around delivering the report (outcomes from that meeting noted below). The team would like to recommend that for 2021 Unitec looks to develop our own ratings grounded in Te Noho Kotahitanga (Unitec's values) and based on NZQA's Te Hono o Te Kahurangi. This would alter the approach of the PEP template. This request is because it would not only cohere with Unitec's work in integrating mātauranga Māori via Manaakitia te Rito and the Takitahi, but also because the emphasis there is on identifying development needs, as opposed to passing judgement.

Overall, the team valued this opportunity to share expertise, though coming in the midst of the daily unfolding response to Covid-19 the workload proved pressured (each report taking 1-3 hours to analyse).

PEP process from here

2019 End of Year PEP reports

In taking the results of the PEP analysis to a meeting of the Heads of Schools (HoSs) for their advice about best process from here, the decision was made to focus on formative feedback and support, rather than delivery of the ratings, though HoSs can choose to see these for the purposes of identifying where the most support needs to be directed. The following process was decided:

- ➔ A window of opportunity to improve 2019 End of Year PEPs will be open until the end of April. PEPs in particular view should be those participating in the IER and those of Degrees (Level 7+) – documents going to NZQA in June – though this can also be seen as an opportunity to invest in evaluative writing within the School for all future PEPs.
- ➔ An email will be sent to Heads of School to arrange a meeting of the analyst(s) who worked with their PEPs and either Rosemary or Simon from Te Korowai Kahurangi to receive *formative feedback*. The HoS will decide if they wish to see the ratings. These will only be shared with them, and for the purpose of determining what kind of support, for whom, is most needed.
 - The Head of School can choose who attends the meeting. It may be just themselves; it may include the APMs/PEP writers.
 - In that meeting a decision will be made about what PEPs will be revisited and how best to work with the writers to support them through that. One-on-one or one-on-group investment from the analyst (or a member of the analyst team) is on offer.
- ➔ A question remains re whether to engage in a School- or Unitec-level development of the PAQCs in their PEP review. Re-written PEPs will need to be reviewed again by their PAQCs.

There was also a discussion about what could be the best approach to the 2020 PEPs. Heads of School are requesting that only the Schools and their programmes involved in the EER go through an Interim PEP process. It should be 'front-loaded' in that: teams be supported in their collating of evidence toward effective Āta-kōrero; nominated writers be supported in their writing of the reports (taken through workshops to be clear about expectations, and any needed mentoring); teams be guided through the report so they are able to speak to it; PAQCs be developed in their ability to review the PEPs (if they need further training). They then suggest that this process, 'piloted' with these four Schools, become the process for approaching the 2020 End of Year PEP.

Recommendations:

1. Once PowerBI licences have been purchased, require all fixed-term and permanent academic staff to go through the training workshops run by TKKInsights in how to use and interrogate the Dashboards, to improve resourcing for evaluative conversation and reporting.
2. Determine an agreed means for booking workshops that connects with all staff. Wufoo?
3. Unitec encourage Āta-kōrero as a common practice of programme teams such that conversation can therefore be focused and summative for the facilitated PEP process – draw from the video resources created for Āta-kōrero facilitation training to empower this.
4. Ensure a DG email list exists for Programme Coordinators and Discipline Leaders for including them in all future communication about Āta-kōrero and resourcing for the PEP process.
5. Create explicit guidance relating to the collection and retention of key data/evidence to inform evaluative practice.
6. Offer training for Āta-kōrero notetakers and PEP report writers in evaluative commentary.
7. Offer training to PAQC chairs in evaluative review from the governance perspective for PEPs and consider a means for PEPs to be reviewed by PAQCs not containing members of the programme teams concerned.
8. QAB re-consider the timing of the Āta-kōrero season (currently mid-year and end-of-year) and propose a strategy for ensuring more facilitators are trained.
9. Te Korowai Kahurangi and Te Puna Ako, with the Kaihautū, develop ratings for Programme Evaluation and Planning in 2021 grounded in Te Noho Kotahitanga and based on Te Hono o Te Kahurangi. Redevelop the PEP template to match, which will also address the challenge of better weaving Te Noho Kotahitanga through our Āta-kōrero: Evaluative Conversations.
10. In the wake of that work, consider offering a scaffolded template for the next PEP to walk writers through reporting expectations.
11. Continue the Mahi Kotahitanga of Te Korowai Kahurangi and Te Puna Ako in providing PEP Analysis, factoring this into workload.
12. Affirm the decision made by the Heads of Schools regarding reviewing the 2019 End of Year PEP reports.
13. QAB discuss and confirm the process for the 2020 Interim PEPs and End of Year PEPs given that any preparation for resourcing this needs two-three months to put in place.