
To	Te Komiti Mātauranga Academic Committee	From	Simon Nash, Executive Director Ako.
Title	Update on Learner Non-Completions Initiatives	Date	28 September 2020

Recommendation/s

That Academic Committee note the work currently underway to improve our understanding of reasons for learner non-completions and to reduce non-completions.

Background

One of the 2019 EER recommendations was:

Recommendation KEQ 2: Undertake more detailed study into the reasons that prevent some learners from completing their studies and/or returning after Year One. Ensure the Academic Board actively monitors such matters and works on interventions within the purview of Unitec.

Our response to-date is described in the table below. The initiatives listed are all new activities or significant refinements of existing processes. Most have also been regularly reported in our Academic Quality Action Plan. The table does not include existing 'business-as-usual' activity that supports reductions in non-completions.

Most of the initiatives described are part of a coordinated effort to reduce non-completions, put in place following the 2019 EER recommendations.

The focus of this work since the last EER has been both on reducing non-completions and increasing course completions, retention and qualification completions, as these are inextricably linked.

Impact to-date

'Outcomes and learnings' are described in the table below.

My view is that the cumulative effect of these initiatives is beginning to be evidenced in the following:

- 'Lead indicators' such as highest-ever ratings for Student Net Promoter Score and Student Course Surveys in Semester One 2020.
- Improved student performance in Successful Course Completions rates and Qualification Completion rates in Semester One 2020.

Next Steps

Further reporting to Academic Committee will be provided in 2020 or 2021.

As most of these initiatives have been in place for less than a year, and generally only since Semester One or Semester Two in 2020, there has been limited evaluation to-date. There has also been limited time to see an impact on student performance.

Further work is needed to:

1. Evaluate the impact of these initiatives and refine the activities.
2. Better understand the full range of reasons for non-completions.
3. Better establish where we have agency over factors impacting on non-completions, and where not. For example, where personal, financial and pastoral matters are implicated, there are limits to Unitec's influence.
4. Consider where there may be scope for action at NZIST level or in collaboration with partner subsidiaries such as MIT.

Consulted

The following have provided input on the table below – Annette Pitovao, Dan Brady, Simon Tries, Glenn McKay, Trude Cameron and Nick Sheppard.

Activity, timeframe, main stakeholders	Specifics	Outcomes and learnings	Next steps
<i>I See Me</i> Late-2019 onwards Priority Group Directors and teams, Te Puna Ako, Schools. Reports two-monthly. Moodle link	Five Focus Areas for 2020: 1. Onboarding, Transition and First Six Weeks 2. Monitoring Learner Progress and providing support 3. Embedding I See Me in courses, learning & teaching 4. Building Staff Capability 5. International Code of Practice	Lead indicators of student course surveys and student NPS both at highest recorded levels in Sem 1 2020. First improvements seen in Māori Qualification Completion Rate at 49.9%. Very high awareness of this and parity targets as Unitec priorities. Very high engagement - All School and Support Teams staff are participating.	Evaluation of impact and outcomes in late 2020 – 2021. Refinements to focus areas.
<i>Hapai Ō</i> Established mid-2020 Priority Group Directors and teams, Te Puna Ako, Schools. Reports two-monthly.	Targeted additional support for courses with poor outcomes for Māori and Pacific learners. Agreed actions and resourcing for courses in 16 programmes in 7 Schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trades and Services (NZCert Auto, NZ Cert Cons Trade Skills, NZ Cert Mech Eng, NZ Cert PGD) - Architecture (BAS) - Building & Construction (BCons, NZDE, NZDip Arch Tech, NZDip Cons) - Computing, Electrical and Applied Technology (NZ CEE, BComp) - Bridgepoint (NZCSP L3/4) 	Sem 2 2020 results earliest for any improved learner outcomes, more likely Sem 1 2021. However, strong engagement to date in Schools and evidence of high level of understanding of issues and significant work already underway in most areas.	Evaluation of impact and outcome in 2021. Refinements to process. Likely Phase 2 – identification of further areas for targeted support.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applied Business (NZ Cert Real Estate, BBus) - Environmental & Animal Sciences (NZ Cert Animal Care) 		
Learner Outreach Project Late-2019 onwards Student Success, Priority Group Directors and teams, Te Puna Ako, Schools. Reports monthly. LOP Dashboard link	Learner Outreach team who identify, contact and support at-risk learners. Student Support Database tracks and records needs of at-risk learners. Embedded Learner Outreach Advisors now 1 x FTE per School. Partnering with teaching teams to support individual learners. Referrals for academic and pastoral support. During COVID Sem 1 lockdown, over 5000 outbound calls made, reaching 87% of learners and identifying 1307 at 'high-risk' with pastoral and academic support needs.	Embedded and encouraged a learner-centric approach. Improved collaboration across Support Teams and Schools. Intensive, highly successful COVID support – strong positive student feedback on value of outreach. High visibility and access to data on at-risk learners via dashboard.	Improving integration of LOP with School-based initiatives is underway. 1 x FTE in each School. Refinements to data collection and coding for 2021 to support better understanding of reasons for non-completions.
COVID-19 responses 2020 Unitec-wide and specific activities	Establishment of Unitec Incident Management Team using CIMS methodology for incident response/oversight. Establishment of Academic Recovery Committee as sub-committee of Academic Committee for rapid academic decision-making. Expanded Learner Outreach Project as per above.		
Research on non-completions among Pacific Learners During 2020 Falaniko Tominiko	Report due in next week	Identifies main reasons why Pacific learners withdraw and do not re-enrol as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial hardship - Family obligations 	To be advised.

		- Health issues	
Research on non-completions among Māori, Under-25s and International learners 2020 Priority Group Directors, Tuapapa Rangahau	Reporting due end of 2020. Survey of non-completing students from 2018 – Sem 1 2020. Staff focus group.	To be advised.	To be advised.
Cohort-Based Qualification Non-Completion Profiling Dashboard 2020 Te Korowai Kahurangi Dashboard link	Analysis of qualification non-completions by demographics per School / programme and learner, including age, gender, ethnicity, level of study, prior activity, prior education, credits passed.	Data available to all Schools on profile of non-completers. Visibility, improved understanding and awareness of non-completions. Profiling and prediction of non-completers.	Dashboard ongoing improvements.
Predictive modelling of non-completions 2020 – 2021 Te Korowai Kahurangi	Analysis of data on non-completers within Schools and programmes, initially for period 2015 – 2019. Prediction using these variables: Study mode, age, prior activity, ethnicity, gender, residency, prior quals, new/returning, course completions. Estimated up to 83% accuracy in predicting non-completions.	Quality of predictive modelling means it can be used to support activities to reduce non-completion. e.g. clear identification of new students' pastoral and academic needs and rapid interventions. e.g. recalibration of entry requirement to support student success.	Goal for 2021 is to use this modelling, plus improved data from Learner Outreach, SEAtS, Moodle Activity, to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide early, real-time identification of at-risk learners 2. Design interventions and put supports in place.
Enrolment Processing Operations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outbound contacts attempts made to no show students 2. Multi-channel communications used 3. Partnering with Schools & LOP, an additional contact attempt is made by 	Embedded and encouraged a learner-centric approach. Improved collaboration across Support Teams and Schools	Business as usual processes

	LOP prior to Enrolment processing withdrawing the student		
Updated Admissions, Enrolments & Fees policy Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significantly reduces number instances of exceptional refunds Creates clear rules and avoids differing interpretations 	Created a policy for greater equity and more certainty for learners in terms of when refunds apply & what they will receive – supports decision making.	Business as usual processes
Schools Annual Operations Plan	Tasks, aims and responsibilities relating to reducing non-completion are highlighted throughout the plans – including proposed outcomes and timeframes.	<p>Progress against tasks and goal/ EPIs, and selected programmes of work reported monthly.</p> <p>Raised awareness of School activity.</p>	<p>On-going review against plan and aims/ tasks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 monthly School Evaluative Commentaries. December 2020 – end of year review
Investigation into issues related to non-completion 2020 Trude Cameron leading	<p>Commissioned by ELT.</p> <p>Investigating issues and resolutions relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-enrolment and re-enrolment and lack of oversight, checking and validation of students' decisions Provision of course information to support student decision-making, information access, etc Quality of Peoplesoft data Barriers to enrolment, programme entry and graduation Use of Course-Related Materials provisions to reduce hardship on learners. 	Interim September 2020 report available here.	<p>Next report due to QAB November 2020.</p> <p>Further investigation to come on impact of withdrawals, “no-shows” and bad debts on non-completions.</p>
SEAtS Attendance Tracking 2018 onwards	Electronic SEAtS attendance monitoring system, providing real-time attendance data	Significant teething issues with deployment, but provides greatly enhanced oversight and monitoring of	Using data more effectively for real-time monitoring and support of at-risk learners.

	<p>that allows staff to monitor and support at-risk learners, and contributes to learner analytics.</p> <p>Operates via a mobile phone app or a swipe card and card readers in all learning spaces.</p> <p>Limitations evident in COVID as based on physical attendance.</p>	non-attendance – a key contributor to non-completion.	Using data to support analysis and predictive modelling of non-completions.
Improvements to Qualification Non-Completions data Ongoing	Current issues include the inclusion in TEC Qualification Completion Rates of large numbers of students enrolled at Chinese Partner Universities solely for Moodle access, with negative impact on QCR.		
School PEPs and Evaluative Commentaries Ongoing	<p>PEPs focus on rich evaluation based in KEQs and using our <i>Āta Kōrero</i> process. Judgements are made against rubrics on student outcomes. Action planning and follow up documented at each PEP.</p> <p>Head of Schools write 'Evaluative Commentaries' based on all School PEPs, providing an analysis of School-wide trends and issues related to student performance. Contributes to School-level action planning.</p>	<p>Sharing best practice.</p> <p>Strong evidence of causal relationship of Schools and programmes with sustained, comprehensive, wrap-around pastoral and academic support leading to consistently high successful course completions, particularly for Māori and Pacific learners, e.g. Creative Industries, Social Practice, MPTT.</p> <p>Process that foster collaborative and deep insights into barriers to completion.</p>	Continuous improvement to business as usual processes.
Specific actions in Schools Many and various	<p>e.g. Bachelor of Construction third year in block mode to allow students to work on internships and study.</p> <p>e.g. Māori and Pacific Trade Training scholarships and support in School of</p>	Initiatives that reduce the risk of non-completion by removing some of the barriers to successful study.	

	Trades, providing intensive pastoral and academic support and financial assistance. e.g. Cybersecurity Diploma comprising work-based projects that are likely to lead to employment with those companies.		
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