VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

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THE EDUCATION (PASTORAL CARE OF TERTIARY AND INTERNATIONAL LEARNERS) CODE OF PRACTICE

2024 SELF-REVIEW

Te Herenga Waka—
Victoria University of Wellington

October 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This self-review report is part of the 2024 monitoring process for the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice (2021), hereafter referred to as the Code. It considered the four cornerstones of the Code: Te Tiriti o Waitangi; Wellbeing and Safety; Learner Voice and Whole-of-provider approach.

It is a comprehensive report focusing on how Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington approaches Code Outcome areas 1–4 and improvements made and underway since the Code came into effect in January 2022.

Outcome one: providers must take a whole-of-provider approach to maintain a strategic and transparent learner wellbeing and safety system that responds to the diverse needs of their learners.

Outcome two: providers understand and respond to diverse learner voices and wellbeing and safety needs in a way that upholds their mana and autonomy.

Outcome three: providers must foster learning environments that are safe and designed to support positive learning experiences of diverse learner groups.

Outcome four: providers must support learners to manage their physical and mental health through information and advice and identify and respond to learners who need additional support.

We acknowledge the staff and tauira contributions to this self-review process and the report.

UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

The University's senior leadership team, Te Hiwa, has overseen a range of strategic and operational developments. These include, for example, work done on the admissions and enrolment system, the Learner Success Plan, Te Ara Taupuhipuhi—Disability Inclusion Action Plan, Ki te rā—Student Wellbeing Outcomes Framework, and the Student Experience Committee. In 2024, Te Herenga Waka worked through a strategic plan refresh, putting in place some key systems for identifying and responding to priorities across the University.

Challenges in the current context include the University's financial sustainability, post-COVID-19 student educational experiences, climate change, cost of living, and the rapid emergence and development of artificial intelligence.

Te Herenga Waka is committed to the wellbeing and safety of tauira communities. Teams involved in ensuring student safety and wellbeing, as well as ensuring students have a positive experience that supports their educational achievement, are dealing with strong tauira demand and engagement, across diverse communities with different needs and expectations.

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington

WELLBEING AND SAFETY STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS

Strategy

The University has strategies, frameworks, plans, and committees which relate to Code requirements. Information on the Code and key wellbeing improvement projects are published on the website.

A university-wide Student Experience Committee was established in 2023, which advises on and monitors progress related to the Code, and includes members from student representative groups.

The Kia Haumaru, Kia Matatū—the Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Strategy 2024–2028 further strengthens the University's vision to have a healthy and thriving community.

Ngā Kīwai o te Kete is the framework that has guided tauira engagement, primarily with the student associations and representative groups that are members of the Student Assembly.

Ki te rā—Student Wellbeing Outcomes Framework aims to help everyone at the University understand and embed wellbeing into their mahi. Tauira at the representative groups' self-review workshop commented that this framework is making steps in the right direction.

Systems

The Digital Solutions team involves tauira in the design of digital environments when introducing new systems or making improvements. The Centre for Academic Development (CAD) team supports the operation of the University's learning platform, Nuku. It collaborates with student services to ensure systems are working to support Code activities and that academic staff are supported to contribute to the Code outcomes. CAD will be actively involved in upcoming work using learning analytics to inform services supporting tauira. The CAD team will also be key to the redevelopment of critical first-year courses impacting on tauira success.

Digital Solutions takes a partnership approach to developing and delivering digital systems and services and contributes to several actions relating to 'Transforming the way we work: Manaakitanga'; for example, ensuring all key University digital systems have Māori macrons activated, where possible, and that te reo Māori is incorporated into the user interface (e.g., Pūaha and Kurawai).

Processes

Central Service Units across the University interact with the Code and its processes to ensure they are upholding Code obligations. Many services map their work, responsibilities, or operational plans to the Code outcomes. Staff reported that they were working well together to support tauira wellbeing.

Examples of improvements to processes include Property Services using the 'Safety in Design' process to ensure spaces are designed and/or modified to prevent accidental or deliberate harm to self or others, and Mauri Ora—Student Health and Counselling introducing an intake process to manage the increase in demand from tauira wanting to access counselling.

People and skills

The role of Tumu Whakauru—Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students) was added to Te Hiwa—Senior Leadership Team in late 2023 and is responsible for developing and implementing strategies that focus on student recruitment, retention, and experience.

Āwhina, Pasifika Student Success team, and a dedicated network of student services teams support students' wellbeing, development, and educational achievement, while engaging and empowering tauira to manage their own wellbeing.

Mauri Ora employed two Pasifika counsellors, a hauora navigator for Māori and Pasifika students, a kaiārahi tauira, and a Māori mental health coordinator, which led to an increase in Māori and Pasifika engagement with counselling and wellbeing services.

Manawa Ora—Student Wellbeing provides wellbeing support programmes facilitated by student leaders who are trained in peer support enabling students to connect and strengthen their wellbeing.

Working together to support tauira success using an integrated approach has long been part of the way student services teams collaborate. Te Pūrengi—Student Experience and Wellbeing organises regular cross-team meetings and opportunities for all support service staff to connect and collaborate.

In mid-2024 as part of Te Pūrengi Directorate, a new Student Equity and Wellbeing portfolio was established. Led by the associate director, Student Equity and Wellbeing, this is an opportunity to further elevate equity and wellbeing across the University. This portfolio includes Te Amaru—Disability Services, Kahukura—Rainbow and Inclusion, Konene—Refugee Background Student Support, and Manawa Ora—Student Wellbeing and is leading the implementation of Ki te Rā—Student Wellbeing Outcomes Framework.

Staff training

Over the past couple of years, training for staff about the Code and resources tailored to roles in the organisation have been developed. The 2021 Gap Analysis identified a staff training delivery plan was required. Progress has been achieved and will continue to be reviewed and enhanced.

The 2023 Self-attestation Report noted the Recognise, Respond, and Refer training refresh (Outcome 1(4)). Āwhina and the Tauria—Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team gave feedback that a stronger Māori perspective is required and further development is planned in 2024.

Te Hāpai is a staff development programme designed to increase understanding and use of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Feedback from Āwhina and student representatives suggested Te Hāpai becomes compulsory for all staff and to facilitate wider reo Māori competency among staff. The University recognises the need for all staff to develop a deep understanding and appreciation for diverse cultural perspectives and cultural competency.

New Staff Welcome and Induction provides insights about student life from students and includes training on health and safety.

The University has robust plans for ensuring the safety and welfare of staff and tauira and continued operation of core activities— before, during, and after an emergency. Safety, risk, emergency response, and business continuity training are provided to staff to help them in their roles and to foster a safe community. In 2024, the emergency response training refresh included an updated Crisis Management Team response plan.

The Accommodation team ensures hall residents arrive prepared for Wellington life. Online induction modules were developed in the first part of 2024, which every new student arriving at a hall completes. This includes improved fire safety and earthquake preparedness tailored to each residential hall.

Contact information is in the footer of the University's webpages and phone numbers are hyperlinked to remove the possibility of entering the wrong emergency number.

Tauira at risk assessment

In Te Herenga Waka strategic risk framework, each strategic risk has a Te Hiwa—Senior Leadership Team risk owner and a risk card to support their risk assessment and work planning.

Collaborative case management approaches for enrolled tauira with the most complex mental health or behavioural issues that may pose a risk to themselves, or others, are discussed in three multi-disciplinary committees, which include clinicians: the Risk Assessment Advisory Committee (RAAC); the Wellbeing and Safety Review Committee; and the Offshore Student Risk Committee.

These committees share information about complex cases and the management of tauira and coordinate safety netting and care plans. Those students with the highest risk profiles are escalated to the Risk Oversight Group to sign off on case plans and provide further guidance, where needed.
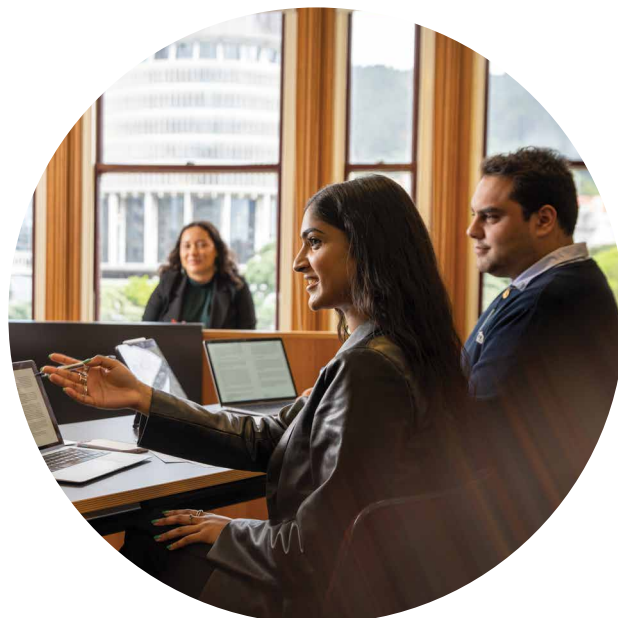
STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

Ngā Kīwai o te Kete—Student Engagement Framework builds on the University's Strategic Plan and reflects the Te Tiriti Statute, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Framework. The framework will be reviewed by the end of 2024 to ensure tauira voice and partnership, participation and collaboration in decision-making, and initiatives to support the student experience are optimised.

New for 2024, Ki te rā: Student Wellbeing Outcomes Framework Working Group will comprise tauira leaders, professional staff, and academic staff with wellbeing expertise. They will provide regular updates to staff and tauira on implementation and an annual report for the director, Te Pūrengi.

There is formal student academic representation on a range of boards and committees. Students are formally included in the many forums that make decisions about student services through representation from a range of groups. Formal academic and student services representative structures are complemented by regular one-to-one meetings between student leaders and University leaders.

Student feedback

Teams across the University seek tauira feedback to understand and respond to diverse learner voices and wellbeing and safety needs in a way that upholds their mana and autonomy.

For example, the Communications and Marketing teams developed a tone and voice document in response to tauira feedback to ensure use of language is what students connect with and understand, and Rainbow and Inclusion worked with Digital Solutions, in response to tauira feedback, to extend the pronoun options in Pūaha.

There are multiple ways for hall residents to communicate with staff: in person, anonymous suggestion boxes, the catering app, and an online form for feedback, concerns, and complaints. Halls staff are strengthening the feedback loop to ensure tauira can see the changes made as a result of their feedback and understand when changes are not able to be made.

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) and Ngāi Tauira Māori Students Association are regularly consulted during the review of University policies to ensure student needs and interests are well represented. The Campus Life Policy, Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Policy, Intimate and Close Personal Relationships Policy, and Sustainability Policy are among recent examples.

VUWSA reported feeling heard by Mauri Ora, Ngāi Tauira knows that "Āwhina are our champions", and Pasifika students feel comfortable to voice concerns to the Pasifika Success team. However, students felt that discussion about a particular issue often prioritises optics over genuine collaboration. This underscores the importance of fostering transparent and accessible channels for collaboration between students and the University administration to facilitate meaningful dialogue and enact positive change.

Student feedback—survey

The Student Survey Governance Group meets quarterly to discuss and decide on student survey matters, results, and action planning oversight. Results from student surveys are published on the University website and are reviewed by staff to guide continuous improvements to student experience.

Student Voice—Have Your Say sets out to capture tauira impressions of their University experience, as well as asking about various aspects related to student life. The 2024 survey included new questions to assess illbeing and wellbeing among students. Measuring both will result in being better informed about the state of student wellbeing and mental health and will help identify where to target efforts.

Team-specific student surveys give quantitative and qualitative feedback, focused on a particular service. For example, *"When my degree programmes have been tough and overwhelming, volunteering through the Wellington Plus programme has offered me a positive outlet to focus on something else."*

Āwhina and the Pasifika Student Success team both commented on looking at ways to better use surveys and analysis to inform understanding to help all Māori and Pasifika tauira succeed, and to continue working towards a collective responsibility for Māori and Pasifika student success. Tauira representatives discussed survey fatigue and wanting to know when feedback has been implemented.

Collaboration with students

Staff and tauira working together involves a range of approaches to partnership, including advisory roles, advocacy, co-design, consultation, decision-making, and providing feedback.

Āwhina works alongside Māori student associations: Ngāi Tauira, Ngā Taura Umanga, Ngā Rangahautira, and MAI ki Poneke. The Pasifika Student Success team works collaboratively with the Pasifika Students' Council (PSC) and other student associations on Pasifika events such as Pasifika Week. Te Haumiri—International Student Experience (ISE) meets monthly with the Victoria International Students' Association (V-ISA), the Postgraduate Students' Association (PGSA), PSC, and VUWSA to discuss international tauira concerns and share team updates.

Mauri Ora has regular meetings with tauira representative groups, particularly Ngāi Tauira, VUWSA, UniQ, and the Pasifika Students' Council. They collaborate and are transparent about wait times and workload volume of clinicians and counsellors.

Key initiatives in 2024 included Student Finance working in collaboration with VUWSA on a kitchenware drive to assist students with flat setup costs, and a free clothing drive for tauira in Trimester 2.

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The 2023 Self-attestation Report detailed updates on the University's complaints process, including appreciation from VUWSA on the progress made, noting the need for improved communication. The website has been updated to improve communication on how to raise a concern, make a complaint, or resolve a conflict and more work will continue to be done on improving the information available to students. In 2024, in collaboration with the Office of the Tumu Ahurei—Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori), the Tauria—SICR team plans to look at how the complaints process could include more tikanga Māori.

Services also work directly with tauira to solve issues or complaints.

Work will continue throughout 2025 on enhancements related to the complaints process(es) using tauira and staff feedback to guide the areas of focus for these enhancements.

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SUPPORT SERVICES

As referenced in the 2023 Self-attestation Report, Te Herenga Waka ecosystem of services for tauira is made up of a network of teams that work together to deliver in-person and online services, some for the whole tauira community and others with a cohort-specific focus.

Safe and inclusive communities

There are networks and ways for tauira to connect with their culture on campus and find peer support. The University also supports a vast range of clubs and societies where tauira can connect with each other and become involved with cultural, spiritual, and sporting activities.

Te Herenga Waka promotes an inclusive culture by developing relationships and events with and for tauira to celebrate diversity. For example, the University held its first Eid-Al-Fitr celebration in April 2024, which promoted unity in diversity and celebrated multiculturalism. Academic staff at Te Herenga Waka were lead contributors to the independent research report that underpins the TEC Best Practice Guidelines to Support Refugee-Background Tertiary Learners in Aotearoa New Zealand. This research report was launched at a University event to celebrate World Refugee Day.

Supporting learning participation and engagement

The University has a range of initiatives to engage with tauira prior to enrolment and during orientation and they are revised and improved each year. For example, Āwhina outreach staff discuss opportunities with future tauira about returning to their iwi with skills and knowledge after study, and the refugee background adviser partners with Te Kahupapa— Future Students team to engage with external organisations and prospective tauira from refugee backgrounds.

Improvements made to academic and study skills workshops in New Students' Orientation were well received by new students. Pre-arrival sessions online are very popular with international students. More than 200 tauira attended in Trimester 1, 2024 and slides are emailed to those who do not attend.

Physical and digital spaces and facilities

Te Herenga Waka involves tauira in the design of physical and digital environments when making improvements. Property Services partnered with services and student groups, which resulted in all-gender bathrooms being located at each campus; developing a Rainbow room, in partnership with UniQ; refurbishing prayer rooms for Muslim tauira, and designing a space with the Pasifika Students' Council.

The Library provides inclusive learning environments for Māori and Pasifika that assist tauira to connect to identity and culture.

New Zealand Police run sessions for international students during Orientation called Stay Safe in New Zealand. This includes a workshop on avoiding scamming.

Student services teams provide in-person and online options for advice and support and opportunities for tauira to engage in events.

Te Herenga Waka has practices for providing healthy and safe learning environments, and this extends to workplace learning settings, where the University does everything it can to ensure workplace learners are physically safe. Practice must comply with the internship, placement, and practicum course procedure.

Supporting learners to manage their physical and mental health

The self-review highlighted responsive approaches from teams across the University, such as Mauri Ora collaborating with the School of Architecture in 2024 to pilot six 45-minute psycho-educational sessions to tauira on managing stress and wellbeing in high-performance academia and industry.

University Recreation plays a vital role in providing services and promoting health awareness across the areas of fitness and wellbeing, sports, and clubs. It works with the Student Finance team and offers several fitness and wellbeing grants to tauira throughout the year.

Manawa Ora refreshed its student wellbeing services in 2024 and had record participation rates of students using the Bubble wellbeing space and Storycraft peer support programme. Student representative groups gave feedback about how easily tauira can be surrounded by alcohol and drugs and they would like to see further focus on harm-reduction work.

Proactive monitoring and responsive wellbeing and safety practices

Student support services work together and are trained to understand how to identify tauira at risk. There are continuous improvements being made to early detection systems, and clear procedures and pathways for referring tauira to appropriate services and helping them access those services.

Student success advisers learn practical skills to identify emerging wellbeing concerns in all undergraduate and taught postgraduate tauira and appropriate referral pathways. The primary adviser could be from Āwhina, Pasifika Student Success, WSBG Professional Programmes Office, the Equity Scholarships Programme, or the Manaaki New Zealand Scholarship teams.

The Haumiri—ISE team works closely with Tauria—SICR, Mauri Ora, agencies such as the New Zealand Police and embassies, using a case-management approach. The team also responds to crises in home countries (e.g., war or natural disasters) and provides support for students.

Emergency contact details are required for every student as part of enrolment. There must be details for at least one emergency contact. It is explained to tauira that, in a situation where there is a serious issue relating to health safety or wellbeing, the emergency contact will be contacted to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to connect tauira with support. Wherever possible, this will be with tauira consent unless there is urgent and immediate concern about wellbeing and safety.

Process to deal with critical incidents involving tauira

The University has a framework for managing all critical incidents. Relevant teams or, on occasion, external agencies are involved in the response and follow-up of critical incidents. The University is strengthening collaboration with community partners to improve responsiveness to critical incidents. In 2024, Te Herenga Waka reported on Student Critical Incidents from 2023. This is publicly available on the University's website to support transparency and openness regarding the University's complaints procedures to meet the Code reporting requirements.

The Incident Management Team manages any emergency response at the University. This team is responsible for emergency response plans, and it carries out regular training and response exercises for a range of possible emergencies. In a large-scale emergency, the team will activate an Emergency Operations Centre at Campus Operations, Kelburn campus.

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REFLECTIVE SUMMARY AND FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

Looking back over the past three years since the introduction of the Code, the University has addressed gaps and continued to work in partnership with students to meet Outcomes 1–4.

Wellbeing and safety

Wellbeing and safety are priorities for the University. The Ki te rā—Student Wellbeing Outcomes Framework 2024-2030 aims to enhance tauira hauora, prevent poor wellbeing, and empower students to thrive while reaching their potential. The refreshed Emergency Response training has strengthened ongoing training and management. This self-review identified many positive examples of promoting wellbeing and safety to enable tauira academic success. However, the pressures and challenges of tauira are complex and there is high demand for student services.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute, which centres around eight principles, sets out a clear pathway for applying Te Tiriti at Te Herenga Waka when implementing and giving effect to the Code outcomes. While this self-review acknowledges areas requiring improvement, teams have a commitment to being good Te Tiriti partners. Several initiatives, practices and new Māori staff roles have been put in place in recent years, with support and advice from Te Tari o Te Tumu Ahurei Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori).

While many teams at the University weave te reo and tikanga Māori into service delivery and team culture, there remains the need to further embed this. A collective responsibility for Māori student success is the role of all teams, not only Āwhina and Māori staff who can carry a disproportionate load.

Learner voice

Evidence gathered in this self-review on positive student partnership and consideration of learner voice was extensive. This demonstrates good progress towards valuing and embedding learner voice. Ensuring student representatives are supported and trained is an area where further improvements can be made. Transparent and accessible channels for collaboration between diverse learners and the University is key to ensure learners and their communities are at the centre of the education system.

Ongoing review and implementation of better processes for learner complaints is being addressed as a priority. Tauira input will be sought to make this process more accessible and user-friendly.

Whole-of-provider approach

The feedback from contributors during the self-review demonstrates the breadth of work teams carry out to improve practices using relevant data and tauira feedback. There is a strengthened culture of continuous improvement and collaboration across teams as well as better understanding of the Code. Staff training has been significantly progressed and further enhancements will continue.

Looking ahead, student services teams will continue to build on strengths in partnership with students and academic staff to provide a visible, accessible, and integrated model of student support.

ONGOING ACTIONS FOR 2025

Area of focus	Action	Lead area
Ki te rā—Student Wellbeing Outcomes Framework	Progress the implementation plan, supporting teams responsible for actions and fostering a collaborative approach. Establish the Ki te rā—Student Wellbeing Outcomes Framework Working Group. Develop a reporting approach for 2025.	Te Pūrengi
Ngā Kīwai o te Kete—Student Engagement Framework refresh	Review the framework to ensure student voice and partnership, participation and collaboration in decision-making, and initiatives to support the student experience are optimised.	Te Pūrengi VUWSA and Student Assembly
Complaints process	Review and enhance the student complaints process to enable a more consistent approach for managing complaints across the University.	Te Pūrengi DVC (Māori) Academic Office
Integrated student services	Make ongoing and iterative enhancements to ensure a pan-university integrated, coordinated, and student-centric approach is consistently used.	Tumu Whakauru—DVC (Students) Director
First-year retention plan	Take a pan-university approach to progress first-year retention initiatives.	Tumu Whakauru—DVC (Students)
Training	Implement a process to monitor staff engagement with Code training courses and maintain a record of learning.	Human Resources
	Continue to expand the delivery of in-person Recognise, Respond, Refer training that complements the Code online courses.	Te Pūrengi
	Partner with VUWSA to strengthen the existing student representatives' training and improve access to University documentation and resources.	Te Pūrengi VUWSA
User experience of student systems (e.g., Kurawai, Pūaha, Nuku, and Banner)	Improve workflows, referral systems, and reporting to enable staff to work efficiently to identify and meet tauira needs.	Digital Solutions Tītoko