

MANA TAURITE, KANORAU ME TE WHAKAWHĀITI EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION



We remain committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment that enables every member of our community to thrive. We hold equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) at the heart of our operations, including our teaching, learning, research, services, and engagement. Our EDI Framework outlines our policy goals related to the recruitment, development, and retention of a diverse community of talented staff and students and informs our practices across the University.

Our commitment to ensuring disabled staff and students are supported to thrive and achieve their aspirations during their time here was strengthened in 2023 with the launch of **Te Ara Taupuhipuhi—Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2023–2025**. Te Ara Taupuhipuhi has been created by Te Amaru—Disability Services in collaboration with staff and students from across the University and builds on the success of the first Disability Action Plan from 2017, which resulted in a significant increase in the number of disabled students at Te Herenga Waka. Our new plan will enhance the disability inclusion and confidence of our community and continue our contribution to best practice in this field.

From the end of 2022 and through to the end of 2023 the EDI programme included the following:

- ▶ Engaging with Pasifika, Enhancing Rainbow Inclusivity and Building Intercultural Competency. Over 100 University staff participated in these workshops.
- ▶ Te Hāpai which comprises seven different workshops continues to support our staff community to increase their understanding of an engagement with Māori culture, language and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Over 900 staff attended these workshops in 2023.
- ▶ The Anti-Racism Initiative (ARI) started in mid-2022 and is a strategic priority for the University. It is a key driver in ensuring Māori, Pasifika, Black and other people of colour that make up the University community are less harmed by structural and interpersonal racism. The initiative has three workstreams: reporting, accountability, and policy; knowledge and education; and wānanga and student experience.
- ▶ Through an equity-centred design approach, the following has been produced:
 - A draft outcome statement and principles for the initiative.
 - An approach to effecting change from the current state to our articulated outcome.
 - Four student wānanga to listen and understand student perspectives involving over 60 students and 25 student associations.

- A set of anti-racism policy principles.
- The integration of the anti-racism policy principles into the draft update of the EDI policy.

As part of the EDI framework focus for staff the University is actively engaging in the Library and administration/ clerical workers pay equity claims process with the other universities and the collaborating unions. This process will identify and mitigate any inequities in roles that have been predominately filled by female employees for many years. The activity in 2023 was working through the project scope, process, and tools for assessment with 2024 moving to assessment, analysis and mitigation work.

Utilising the successful Nuku platform, Te Amaru—Disability Services developed courses to support disabled students' use of inclusive learning software, called Note taking with Glean (a digital note taking app), and study skills with Read&Write. Due to the popularity of Read&Write amongst students and staff, Digital Solutions has now taken over funding this. An overhaul was conducted of the academic inclusion services that are available for disabled students and how these are communicated to ensure they are scalable, sustainable, and easy to access. In response to an increased interest in disability from academic staff we streamlined and increased the effectiveness of Disability Inclusion Arrangements, which share the impact of a student's disability on their participation and learning and outline inclusive strategies for success. Disability inclusion relies on a university wide approach and close collaboration with staff, students, and student leaders (including VUWSA and the Disabled Students' Association) was valuable in supporting disabled students to thrive.

Rainbow inclusion efforts at the university focused on student wellbeing and community development. Initiatives included one-on-one adviser appointments, student-led peer-support, access to gender affirming care, and financial support for students to legally change their name or sex marker. In 2023 we streamlined how we update student information in university systems, including preferred names. Improving communication with rainbow students was also a priority, leading to the redesign of the Rainbow area on the University website as a central

knowledge hub and reestablishment of a community newsletter. While improving inclusive practices across the University remains a significant area for development, a success has been the introduction of rainbow self-identification at enrolment, facilitating increased outreach and better approximations of the size of our rainbow student population to demonstrate the need for continued investment in rainbow inclusion.

Professor Sara Kindon was commissioned by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to develop best practice guidelines for tertiary education organisations to better support refugee-background learners' academic success and improve their experiences as students. This was based on her track record of prior research in this area and national leadership. Professor Kindon worked collaboratively with alumna Ms Sarah Willette to prepare a research report, receiving input from colleagues, and drawing on the lived experience of Refugee Background students in the Aotearoa New Zealand National Tertiary Network. From this they extracted *Best Practice Guidelines to Support Refugee-Background Tertiary Learners in Aotearoa New Zealand*, which the TEC published in November 2023. These guidelines will inform future practice at Te Herenga Waka to achieve an inclusive and equitable tertiary learning environment where refugee learners can succeed.

The University's Refugee Background Adviser continues to provide support and guidance for prospective and current refugee background students, engaging with whānau and community partners and fostering a strong relationship with the student representative group Vic Without Barriers.