The University of Waikato Strategy 2017–2021 signals a commitment to academic excellence and to embracing its motto, Ko Te Tangata (For the People). The Academic Plan has been developed to help operationalise the Strategy. It aims to act as a guide for creating “academically challenging programmes that reflect the interests of students and the needs of employers and the communities with which it is engaged” (UoW Strategy 2017-2021). In the past decade, the tertiary education sector in New Zealand and internationally has changed rapidly and that pace of change will continue. This means that the University of Waikato will also need to keep changing to improve its performance. The University is, however, well positioned to do this. Waikato’s diverse student population provides an opportunity to engage a wide range of views to help co-create innovative, research-informed and student-responsive programmes that support Waikato’s motto Ko te Tangata.

In recent years, the University of Waikato has worked hard to enhance its curriculum considering what is being offered, why, how, when and where. A major objective of the Curriculum Enhancement Programme (CEP) was to create and deliver a more future-focused curriculum that is responsive to changing student, employment and societal need. To achieve this objective the University approved a Curriculum Design Framework (CDF) that lays out curriculum design principles, graduate attributes and a common degree architecture. It is expected that academic programmes going forward will align with the CDF and that the work carried out under the CEP will in the future become business as usual ensuring that offerings remain sustainable and responsive to changing student demand.

Faculties of the University will continue to work collaboratively to develop portfolios of academic programmes designed to provide for the future careers and opportunities that students seek, while also prioritising fundamentally important skills such as critical thinking, questioning, and leadership. In developing academic programmes, faculties will be guided by their research, student knowledge, best international practice, and the impetus to act as critic and conscience of society, as well as the needs of employers and representatives of relevant professions. It is also vital that the faculties strengthen areas that are of national and/or international significance, and identify new and emerging areas for teaching and research. Interdisciplinary programmes that combine expertise from different relevant areas are of particular importance, as they will help equip students to face some of the complex global challenges of our time.

The portfolio of undergraduate programmes offered will recognise the importance of flexibility, enabling students to combine majors and minors, and enrol in conjoint degrees. At postgraduate level there will be opportunities for students to upskill in their existing area of expertise, retrain in a new area of interest, and pursue independent research.

The Academic Plan sets out four overarching objectives, each of which contains a series of specific actions. These objectives and actions are designed to sit alongside the Māori Advancement Plan which helps support Waikato in upholding its mana as the leading University for Māori. The University is committed to being a place where Māori students excel academically and are well equipped for their roles as future leaders. The Academic Plan also sits alongside the Pacific Plan which aims to ensure that the University builds on its teaching and research endeavours to meet the aspirations, needs and priorities of Pacific peoples. In addition, the Academic Plan should be read in conjunction with the Research Plan, which is committed to research that benefits society, is leading edge, has high impact, and offers benefits to the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand and internationally.

While the Academic Plan does not provide Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), each objective does have quantitative and qualitative success factors to enable the University to monitor its progress against the Plan at regular intervals. KPIs and other information about how to determine progress against particular objectives is available in the University of Waikato Investment Plan. Further specific targets and measures
will be developed on an annual basis, in consultation with the Deans, so that progress can be monitored and enhanced as necessary. Each faculty is expected to develop its own more detailed academic plan using the University’s Academic Plan as an overarching framework. With these factors in mind, the Academic Plan aims to deliver on the following objectives:

1. **Invest in high-quality, future focused and relevant programmes delivered by excellent teachers**

2. **Make the University a national leader in high-quality digital teaching and learning**

3. **Provide opportunities within and beyond curriculum to develop work-ready graduates who can operate effectively in local, national and international contexts**

4. **Provide students with an outstanding learning experience and a sense of a distinctive academic identity at the University of Waikato**
Objective 1: Invest in high quality, future focused and relevant programmes delivered by excellent teachers

The CEP provided the University with the opportunity to review its academic portfolio to ensure flexibility and coherence, and develop a set of overarching University graduate attributes to define the University of Waikato student experience. These are captured in the CDF. During the period of this Academic Plan, the University will implement and monitor the impact of these curriculum changes and make adjustments where necessary.

In keeping with the CDF, the University aims to deliver world-leading, research-informed, socially and culturally responsive undergraduate and postgraduate curricula that form part of a network of learning pathways. It encourages interdisciplinarity by cross-listing and co-teaching papers among faculties and programmes, flexibility by allowing students in comprehensive degrees to take any subject as a second major or minor, and a future-focus by incorporating the most up-to-date digital technologies and strategies for developing workplace readiness into all its programmes of study.

It is recognised that full-time study is not the best pathway for every student, particularly students from non-traditional demographics who may have limitations due to existing employment, health and family commitments. Waikato’s flexibility and welcoming of part-time students needs to continue to be part of its distinctiveness, and commitment to equity, egalitarianism and enabling social mobility.

While undergraduate programmes have undergone a thorough review, the University’s portfolio of postgraduate programmes has not yet received this scrutiny but will within the period of this Plan. With Universities New Zealand also reviewing the definitions and regulations around Masters degrees, it is timely to undertake a review. Part of the review will involve staff ensuring that papers and programmes of study are effective in preparing graduates for life and work in an increasingly globalised world. It is important that the University embed the development of intercultural competence into learning outcomes, assessment, teaching, and support.

Doctoral degrees should take students no longer than four years to complete. This is in the students’ best interest because they are more likely to be supported through their qualification by scholarship funding, not accrue additional debt and be able to move on to the next chapter of their lives. It is in the University’s best interest because the Tertiary Education Commission places a 4.0 EFTS funding limit for doctorates. The School of Graduate Research will work to ensure the right systems and quality of supervision are in place across all faculties to achieve this outcome, helping align the University of Waikato with other New Zealand universities. Generic learning development opportunities to help students manage the rigour of doctoral research and writing will also be considered, planned and resourced. A clearer understanding of transferable skills from postgraduate study to employment is also necessary and will be developed throughout the duration of the Academic Plan.

The University must consider not only what and how papers are taught but also when they are taught. Moving to a formal trimester system may assist with issues of workload, student enrolment patterns, 180pt masters, international student start dates and the needs of domestic students. It is important that the University explores operational staff student related issues that may result from a change to trimesterisation. These could include the impact on student accommodation, the provision of core services to staff and students, ensuring staff have consolidated periods for research in each academic year, student pathways, carrying out building maintenance, and the implications for scholarships and for Studylink. The University would not require students to enrol in papers in all three trimesters. While some required papers would be available in the third trimester, these would also be available in the other semesters. Issues such as these will need to be considered carefully in order to make a decision about the structure of the academic year.
What will the University do to achieve this Objective?

- Continue to assess and review all teaching offerings for viability, including academic quality, relevance, and financial sustainability. This will include setting faculty operating targets in terms of student:staff ratios, teaching loads and external research income so that they are consistent with sustainability and future potential funding levels, and establishing clear timeframes over which those targets must be met
- Introduce new and enhance existing high quality interdisciplinary programmes that combine expertise from different relevant disciplines to create academic programmes to meet particular objectives
- Expand offerings in the Unistart programme and facilitate other engagement with secondary schools in the University’s immediate and target regions
- Ensure that teachers are able to differentiate Unistart students in order to offer effective support
- Engage with students, iwi, local business, communities and other stakeholders when reviewing or introducing new qualifications and in developing work placement and other workplace readiness elements
- Have effective methods for reviewing and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience, and ensuring the teaching, learning, and assessment (both formative and summative) of every programme provides a coherent, relevant, and progressive experience for students
- Utilise resources to analyse current postgraduate offerings’ strengths and opportunities from a ‘market’ viewpoint and identify the parts of the portfolio that add most value to the University
- Where required reorient selected taught masters to ensure clear career-related objectives
- Review the types and points values of masters degrees with a view to differentiating between taught, conversion and research masters
- Review the postgraduate student experience, particularly the masters’ student experience, which has been identified as a priority area that would benefit from attention
- Develop clear and appropriately supported pathways for students to progress from undergraduate study through to higher research degrees
- Ensure consistency and equity among faculties in the level of support and resourcing provided to postgraduate students
- Keep ensuring that graduate outcomes are aligned with changing employment, social and market drivers
- Make explicit the links between graduate outcomes and transferable skills for the employment market
- Foster inter-institutional collaborations for joint postgraduate qualifications delivered nationally and internationally
- Provide opportunities for staff to engage in professional development that encourages critical engagement with tertiary teaching and education
- Invest in enhanced support of teaching development to ensure direct engagement by all staff with quality teaching, student feedback on teaching, and the adoption of models of pedagogy that are successful and appropriate for the context in each discipline
- Continue to enhance and expand a professional development programme for staff and sessional assistants engaged in teaching through a structured onboarding programme coordinated by the Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning (CeTTL)
- Provide a suite of papers that can be taken for credit for the PGCert in Tertiary Teaching and Learning or for interest, and faculty-specific professional development workshops and projects
- Develop ways of enhancing teaching development through collaboration between faculty academic leaders, teaching advocates, teaching excellence award holders and CeTTL staff
- Improve the coordination, monitoring and professional development of sessional assistants
- Encourage staff to engage with student feedback on teaching on a continuous basis throughout papers and at the end of the papers through formal evaluations
Objective 2: Make the University a national leader in high-quality digital teaching and learning

The University of Waikato brought the internet to New Zealand, had the first fully online degree programme, and has a history of innovation and national leadership in the digital space. Innovative digital practice and pedagogy needs to be a focus for the whole University to ensure that Waikato is providing its students with the tools, attitudes and dispositions they require to navigate and operate in digital informed environments. Continuing to digitise learning can help in creating more meaning student engagement. It requires staff who are confident, capable and agile in their interactions with digital technology and their ability to engage learners. The University needs to reassert itself as a leader in the digital space.

In order to do this it is imperative to foster the seamless integration of technology into the pedagogy of papers to create excellent learning experiences and extend learning beyond the classroom. It is recognised that the emphasis needs to be on the partnership between teaching, learning and technology rather than on the technology itself. The technology provides a medium for staff to enact their pedagogical philosophy and practice. Although technology can change pedagogy, it needs to be an enabler of improved pedagogical practices as opposed to driving pedagogical change. Staff should feel supported in the development of learning to use technology to enhance their teaching. In addition, the University must ensure teaching staff are recognised and rewarded for using online tools effectively.

In moving towards more innovative digitally enhanced teaching and learning the University will, however, continue to recognise the importance of face-to-face interactions between teachers and students. It is important, therefore, to explore opportunities for expanding the academic timetable to enable more students to take advantage of enrolling in papers and qualifications offered through on-campus or blended teaching. This will help students to build flexible, interdisciplinary programmes. The University will canvas student demand to have a greater range of papers taught outside of standard business hours so that study can be taken alongside paid employment and domestic responsibilities. Expanding the timetable would also enable the University to use its resources, including teaching spaces, more efficiently.

What will the University do to achieve this Objective?

- Ensure all programmes utilise an innovative approach to learning and teaching that is enhanced by the use of technology
- Establish at least one research centre combining expertise in machine learning, digital content and online learning
- Have a full online occurrence available for one 100 level paper in each programme at the University of Waikato
- Build a suite of distance courses using the FutureLearn platform, an activity that will be supported by the University’s FutureLearn Working Group
- Continue to enhance and expand a professional development programme for all staff, and in particular academic staff and sessional assistants, to enable them to use technology confidently as a means to enact successful teaching
- Set up a system that provides time, support and resources for mentoring teachers and sessional assistants who are new to online learning
- Develop an E-learning Framework to guide and inform practice across the University
- Investigate the implementation of and trial online and/or Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) examinations
- Provide a range of comprehensive services for staff including the e-Tuts (Enabling Teachers to Use Technology) service, user-friendly video recording facilities, and teaching trial innovation (sandbox) spaces, to enable them to further develop their teaching practice
- Ensure that weaving technology into teaching is enriching the overall student learning experience
Objective 3: Provide opportunities within and beyond the curriculum to develop work-ready graduates who can operate effectively in local, national and international contexts

As part of preparing students to operate effectively in local, national and international contexts the University needs to have excellent relationships with iwi, school teachers and students, tertiary partners, the professions, industry, Crown Research Institutes (CRI’s), non-government organisations, business, and local and national government. New relationships also need to be sought. In addition to the Waikato and Bay of Plenty, the Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, East Coast, South Auckland and Northland will provide important opportunities for the University. Alongside these local, regional and national relationships, the University also recognises the importance of its international activities and so will ensure that it continues to build and strengthen partnerships with other tertiary partners and organisations across the globe. These linkages with the international community are mutually beneficial enabling both parties to understand and appreciate in more depth each other’s research and teaching strengths.

The University is committed to furthering its plans for internationalisation across a range of areas including research, strategic partnerships, student outward mobility, international student experience and internationalising the curriculum. Students need to be well prepared to operate within the local and national, and increasingly, global context.

In relation to teaching, learning, curriculum and pedagogy the University needs to expose students to local, national and international perspectives within their disciplines. Programmes will provide the opportunity for students to establish networks to gain local, but also when possible national and international experience. To help ensure students have an opportunity to understand how to interact with and be mindful of different cultures and operate in variety of contexts the University has created through the CDF a compulsory cultural perspectives paper. This is one way of helping to ensure that Waikato students are able to operate in a variety of contexts thereby increasing their opportunities for long-term career success.

What will the University do to achieve this Objective?

- Continue to build new and develop existing relationships with community groups, government organisations, CRI’s, iwi and other tertiary teaching and research institutes
- Continue to build new and develop existing relationships with international partners such as the University’s joint institute with China’s Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC)
- Establish new partnerships that enable us to offer more effectively a variety of programmes including at pre-degree level
- Emphasise throughout the curriculum that local and national context and what it means to be a citizen or participant in New Zealand society is important
- Emphasise throughout the curriculum that global context and what it means to have rights and responsibilities that come with being a member of a global entity is important
- Develop in Waikato students a sense that being a responsible, culturally aware and active citizen, locally, nationally and globally, is important
- Raise awareness in Waikato students of the University’s commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi
- Implement vision mātauranga Māori across the institution with a view to creating new ways of thinking and doing
- Increase awareness of and opportunities for students to have an overseas experience as part of their programme of study
- Increase the number and quality of transnational education programmes delivered in part or fully offshore
Objective 4: Provide students with an outstanding learning experience and a sense of a distinctive academic identity at the University of Waikato

It is vital that the University continues to develop a distinctive academic identity. To do this there is a need to identify more clearly and then strengthen leading areas of teaching and research, in the Waikato, Bay of Plenty and beyond. A leading area is a cross-cutting area or theme in which the University can authoritatively claim national and international expertise. These areas will likely change over time. The University also needs to establish a set of shared values across the institution. Work has begun in this area but much remains to be done over the period of this Plan. The motto Ko Te Tangata reflects the University’s philosophy that we are in, of and for the community and provides a useful foundation from which to work. One element of Waikato’s distinctive academic identity is a commitment to partnerships with Māori, a feature for which the University has become renowned locally, nationally and internationally. The University is also committed to becoming increasingly known for building and enhancing the Pacific dimensions of the institution, and to the educational success of Pacific students and staff.

Another element may be that Waikato’s curriculum from 2018 will require all undergraduate students to complete at least one of a work placement, internship, or applied research project with a workplace or community engagement focus. Requiring this of all undergraduate students is currently distinctive to Waikato.

During the period of this Academic Plan, work needs to continue to identify and establish others ways in which Waikato is able to combine excellence in teaching and national research leadership to provide students with an outstanding learning experience and a sense of a distinctive Waikato academic identity.

What will the University do to achieve this Objective?

- Deliver a student experience in a rich, inclusive and diverse environment that reflects the University’s mission Ko te Tangata
- Reinforce through teaching and learning that the University is committed to meaningful partnerships under the Treaty of Waitangi and to providing leadership in academic endeavours relevant to the needs and aspirations of iwi and Māori communities
- Ensure that a culture of research excellence is embedded in every teaching programme to help provide students with an outstanding and distinctive learning experience
- Provide as many undergraduate students as possible with an opportunity to carry out research
- Identify talented undergraduates in order to assist them with developing their research skills
- Invest in identified areas of national leadership and international recognition which combine high quality and innovative teaching and research programmes
- Offer students opportunities to develop their leadership and entrepreneurial skills through academic programmes that reflect the University of Waikato’s core values of having a proud Māori heritage, being innovative and serving the needs of its community
- Make the University of Waikato’s core values more well-known amongst students, staff, iwi, businesses, community groups and others
- Increase the use of student, professional, stakeholder, and employer advice in designing and changing academic programmes to ensure they remain relevant, of extremely high quality, and reflect what is distinctive about the University of Waikato and the regions of the Waikato and Bay of Plenty
- Actively engage with iwi, local businesses, communities, and other stakeholders, with a primary focus on the Waikato and Bay of Plenty to identify opportunities for work-integrated learning and student engagement
- Integrate work placements and practice-based components into every undergraduate student’s curriculum thereby increasing mechanisms for greater iwi, business, community and stakeholder engagement in Waikato’s programmes
- Appropriately resource work-integrated learning in order to help ensure its success
- Student participation in work-integrated learning will be recognised on academic transcripts in a way that will allow students and graduates to demonstrate their work readiness to employers.