

National Project Fund and Good Practice Publication Grants

At the end of July, we were pleased to announce the launch of our National Project Fund and our Good Practice Publication Grants. Both are expressly designed to support the enhancement of teaching and learning as widely as possible across the tertiary sector.

The National Project Fund, which is designed to support strategic initiatives, presently has four different funding streams:

- research and implementation projects
- Māori-initiative projects
- doctoral scholarships
- collaboration projects.

The first two funding streams are to support significant projects (of between \$50,000 and \$150,000) that are directed to the strategic improvement of teaching and learning. They may be either use-inspired research or implementation projects. We are also offering up to three doctoral scholarships (\$25,000 plus fees) to support research into aspects of tertiary teaching and learning.

We are interested in proposals in all areas of tertiary education, but we will give particular priority to proposals that address the following areas:

- assessment and moderation
- contribution to mātauranga Māori and meeting the needs of Māori learners
- learner engagement and learner outcomes

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Welcome

Welcome to Issue 2 of *Ako Aotearoa Alert*. The past few months have been an exciting time for the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence as we begin to make real progress on a series of initiatives.

The announcement of the 2008 Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards in mid-July, the release of our discussion paper *Whole of Organisation Approaches to Improving Teaching and Learning*, and the launch of our National Project Fund and our Good Practice Publication Grants are all important milestones for us. It's particularly rewarding, too, to see the completion of our first two regional hub projects and such strong progress on many more.

So, too, was the opportunity and privilege to be the principal sponsor and to participate in this year's excellent Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) Conference in Rotorua: an exciting and hugely collegial conference with some excellent keynote speakers and some great trans-Tasman discussions. Equally satisfying and inspiring was the Industry Training Federation (ITF) Conference later in July, which we were also pleased to support. It's really good to see the skills debate getting such traction and generating such a high level of informed debate.

As I emphasised in the first edition of this newsletter, a key challenge for Ako Aotearoa (and, I believe, a potential strength) is our mandate to work across the breadth of the tertiary education sector. We can do this only by building effective partnerships with those bodies that are already doing good things for tertiary learners in Aotearoa New Zealand. The invitation to come and talk to us about your interests, your innovative ideas, and your concerns about tertiary teaching and learning is an open one. As always, we look forward to hearing from you.

With very best wishes



Dr Peter Coolbear

National Director, Ako Aotearoa



HERDSA Conference: from left to right are Lorraine Parker (AUT University), Stuart Middleton (Manukau Institute of Technology), Peter Coolbear and Ruth Peterson (Ako Aotearoa).

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- learning pathways
- strategic professional development initiatives
- workplace learning.

Being very aware of the present fragmentation of work in tertiary education within Aotearoa New Zealand, we have also set aside some funds to support the development of collaborations in improving teaching and learning across the sector. Such collaborations may develop into communities of practice (which we will be able to host on our new website), or they may simply be the coming together of like-minded people to explore common interests and future collaborative strategies.

Complementing the National Project Fund is a need for us to continue to celebrate and share good practice across the sector. Our Good Practice Publication Grants are designed to do just that. Anyone with an interest in tertiary education and training is invited to apply for (or nominate others for) a grant to write up or develop multimedia materials that share and reflect on their acknowledged good practice. The grants are designed to provide time and resources to prepare the materials and will generally be between \$3,000 and \$5,000.

From 2009, we plan to add a Pacific peoples' initiative projects stream to the National Project Fund, and we may put out tenders for specific pieces of commissioned work from time to time. Remember, too, that our Regional Hub Project Fund (for small projects of up to \$10,000) is still open for applications at any time.

Further details of all these funds are available on our website www.akoatearora.ac.nz, but please feel free to contact us (either in the regional hubs or at National Office) to discuss potential applications. We look forward to hearing from you.

New website set for September roll-out

As we featured in the first issue of this newsletter, we are currently developing our new website. We are building a site that will make it easy for all educators to get news about what's hot in tertiary teaching and learning, find useful resources for good teaching, and access exemplars of good teaching and learning practice. The site will also encourage the development of and participation in communities of practice. In addition, there will be a comprehensive register of current projects and research in the tertiary sector.

We are pleased to report that Catalyst, the website developer, is now preparing the site for user testing to commence later this month. This will include some of the people already involved in our existing communities. We anticipate the site will go fully live at the end of September. Our regional hub staff will be arranging website demonstration sessions within their regions and will be publicising these shortly.

Please contact Justin Sampson, our knowledge manager, on 04 801 2888 or J.Sampson@massey.ac.nz if you would like more information about the site.

Supporting ACE workshops

On 1 May 2008, Ako Aotearoa hosted a by-invitation workshop bringing together 20 people representing a diverse cross-section of experienced providers, practitioners, and key researchers from the adult and community education (ACE) sector. The workshop was organised by HodderBalog Social and Scientific Research on behalf of Ako Aotearoa and was supported by funding from the Tertiary Education Commission's (TECs) ACE Professional Development Working Group.

This one-day workshop aimed to identify priorities for development projects and research for the sector that could provide a future strategic framework to enhance teaching and learning in adult and community education. Ako Aotearoa Director Peter Coolbear comments: "Adult and community education is an enormously diverse part of the tertiary sector and a vitally important one. However, because of its diversity and informality, it is often undervalued. TEC has started to address this by establishing regional networks, and Ako Aotearoa will look to provide additional support to assist both research and professional development in networks and, where appropriate, activities across the sector."

The workshop resulted in a discussion paper that contributed to our thinking as we made decisions about structure and criteria for Ako Aotearoa's new National Project Fund. Discussion was wide-ranging and identified the need for both greater collaboration across the sector and stronger networks. These were deemed to most likely result from more opportunities for sharing good practice, thereby reducing the feeling of isolation that teachers often experience.

The workshop's participants strongly expressed the need for Ako Aotearoa to support community-initiated projects where communities themselves would drive the work. Liaison with other agencies, such as universities, with experience in research methodologies would serve to strengthen the overall design of the project, embedding it in the community that proposes it, undertakes it, and uses its findings.

Another common theme of discussion focused on Māori and Pacific peoples' valuing success in tertiary education in terms of enhancing leadership, sustaining connectedness, and perpetuating culture, rather than in terms of economic gains or social change.

The discussion paper is available on our website www.akoatearora.ac.nz

Project spotlight: supporting Māori initiatives

We at Ako Aotearoa hold our commitment to te Tiriti o Waitangi as a driving force for developing strong relationships with Māori stakeholders across the tertiary sector. Part of that commitment involves funding projects that will contribute to meeting the needs of Māori learners and enhancing their educational outcomes.



Entrance to the Tuhoē Campus, Ngāti Awa Tertiary Training Organisation (NATTO), Whakatane.

Our new funding scheme, the National Projects Fund, targets Māori-initiative projects of up to \$150,000 as one of its key priorities. This initiative signals a level of commitment to Māori-specific projects on a larger scale, but three regional projects that explicitly target Māori learners are also receiving our support through the Regional Hub Project Fund, which has been in place since the centre was launched last year.

One of the three projects, supported by Ruth Peterson at our northern hub, is Whakatūtaki Ngā Matea Ako for the Ngāti Awa Tertiary Training Organisation (NATTO). Mere Kingi-Merito leads this project with support from Mihimere Jaram-Thomas, the project mentor, and Emlyn Rua.

NATTO developed this project in response to TECs Learning for Living project and their own research, which indicated that 60 to 80 percent of their Māori learners needed to develop basic life skills.

The funding supports the development of an integrated literacy/numeracy teaching resource that can be applied across all NATTO programmes. The organisation has four delivery sites offering New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) qualifications specialising in computing, business administration, forestry, and Māori performing arts.

The contents of the resource are defined by the courses into which they are integrated, ensuring that the learners are aware that these programmes will help them to develop literacy and numeracy skills. The resource is designed to complement the other components of their programmes.

Ako Aotearoa's northern staff were recently invited to visit three of the NATTO training sites and observe students from 15 to 70 years of age participating in the computing and performing arts components of the integrated programme. Various methods were employed during the sessions, including group and individual work and games. Student feedback indicated that most prefer to learn in a community classroom context rather than on their own. One student said, "Sometimes we find it confusing in the books, but when we do it like this, we find it very easy to follow. It might look like a game, but we find it very helpful."

The two other Māori projects funded by the Regional Hub Project Fund are supported by Ian Rowe through our central hub.

Train the Trainers: Mātauranga Māori is a \$25,000 collaborative project, of which \$10,000 is funded by Ako Aotearoa. It involves the collaboration of four industry training organisations (ITOs): the Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organisation (ATTTO), the Seafood ITO, the Sport Fitness and Recreation ITO, and Māori Regional Tourism Organisations. ATTTO, under project leader Eamon Nathan, has been involved in the Tourism Māori Assessor Training Project since March 2006. The key purpose of this project was to develop trained assessors for the National Certificate in Tourism Māori (level 3) in order to address content and on-the-job learning support for students undertaking the Māori components of the certificate.

A cohort of 12 trainers will work through relevant adult education unit standards and develop resources to teach their particular components of domain Māori as well. They will be mentored through their training and will be given opportunities to teach their components shortly after completing the course.

Catherine Ross of Open Polytechnic is being funded for her project on culturally relevant support for first-year Māori and Pasifika student engagement, retention, and success. The project will develop guidelines for the learning support practices of these first-year students, supply content for The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (TOPNZ) academic staff development programme, and provide online resources to support all first-year Māori and Pasifika students.

We look forward to collaborating, through our Regional Hub Project Fund and National Project Fund, with many more Māori individuals, groups, and organisations that are focused on enhancing the teaching and learning experience for Māori learners.



Mothers and babies learn at the Poroporo Training Centre, NATTO.

Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards celebrate great teaching



2008 Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award Winners: from left to right are Adrian Woodhouse, Dr Sean Weaver, Dr Marc Wilson, Hon Pete Hodgson (host), Professor John Hosking, Dr Lisa Emerson (Supreme Award Winner), Julia Bruce, Dr John Reynolds, Dr Ian McAndrew, Dr Hamish Anderson, Dr Dawn Garbett, Emeritus Professor Graeme Fraser (Chair of the Awards Committee).

July has been a very important month for Ako Aotearoa as first-time organisers of the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards. The event, hosted by the Minister for Tertiary Education, the Hon Pete Hodgson, brought well-earned recognition and reward to some of New Zealand's top teachers, who were there to celebrate with their organisations, their families, and each other. It was a memorable event for all the staff here at Ako Aotearoa, and we are very proud of our close association with it.

The ten sustained excellence award recipients were:

- Dr Hamish Anderson, Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics and Finance, Massey University
- Julia Bruce, Hairdressing Tutor, Centre for Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy, Waikato Institute of Technology
- Dr Lisa Emerson, School of English and Media Studies, Massey University
- Dr Dawn Garbett, Associate Dean Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland
- Professor John Hosking, Professor of Applied Computer Science, Department of Computer Science, University of Auckland
- Dr Ian McAndrew, Senior Lecturer in Employment Relations, Department of Management, School of Business, University of Otago
- Dr John Reynolds, Senior Lecturer, Department of Anatomy and Structural Biology, University of Otago
- Dr Sean Weaver, School of Geography, Environment and Earth Science, Victoria University of Wellington
- Dr Marc Wilson, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington
- Adrian Woodhouse, Catering Lecturer, School of Hospitality, Otago Polytechnic.

This year the recipient of the Prime Minister's Supreme Award, selected from one of the ten sustained excellence awardees, was Dr Lisa Emerson of Massey University. Lisa's contribution to teaching spans a 19-year career, and she has received many prestigious awards and grants. She starts her portfolio by declaring "It is my great privilege and joy to be a teacher of writers." What is impressive about her work is the variety and breadth of her teaching and assessment. Lisa has designed and taught writing courses right across the university, especially for science and technology students. Many people have benefited from Lisa's Interactive Grammar! e-learning tool and the open website for creative writers called The Writery, which won the People's Choice Web Award in 2004. During her acceptance speech, she said, "It is utterly remarkable to be given an award for what you

love doing anyway." This enthusiasm for teaching reflects a common theme identified in all of the winning portfolios: concern for students and inspiring them to achieve.

The Hon Pete Hodgson paid his own tribute to the award winners: "No matter what their area of expertise, these winners are committed, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and expert in their chosen discipline. They have much to teach and share with us."

During his speech, the Minister also paid tribute to Emeritus Professor Graeme Fraser, Chair of the Awards Committee, who is now stepping down from this role, which he has held since the first awards round in 2002. "Graeme will be extraordinarily difficult to replace – he has ensured the integrity and reputation of these awards and brought to the process his own commitment to tertiary teaching excellence, which was manifest throughout his own academic career."

A detailed profile on each of the ten excellence award winners will be published in the 2008 booklet *Excellence*. This will be available from early November via our new website at www.akoatearoa.ac.nz or by contacting us at info@akoatearoa.ac.nz

First two projects funded by regional hub completed

The contrasting nature of our first two completed regional hub projects reflects Ako Aotearoa's commitment to addressing the educational outcomes of learners across the entire tertiary sector. In July, the Central Region Hub Advisory Group signed off a study into work-based apprentice learning materials for the Building and Construction Industry Organisation (BCITO) by Dr Amanda Gilbert and a project that contributes to building capabilities among tertiary teachers and researchers to participate in remote collaborations by Dr Irina Elgort of Victoria University of Wellington (VUW).



Dr Irina Elgort (Victoria University of Wellington) and Dr Amanda Gilbert (independent consultant for BCITO).

When Ako Aotearoa was launched last year, one of our first actions was to release the Regional Hub Project Fund. This scheme aims to support tertiary research or activity projects of up to \$10,000 that align with our vision to create and support the best possible educational outcomes for learners in the tertiary sector. To date, 33 projects have been approved through our three regional hub offices, based in Auckland, Palmerston North, and Christchurch, and over a quarter of a million dollars of funding support has been committed. We are delighted to see these first two projects successfully completed.

BCITO invited tertiary education consultant Dr Amanda Gilbert to conduct a study of learning materials used in their qualification courses, using the National Certificate of Carpentry as the pilot. The organisation believed they had a good-quality product but recognised that little research had been undertaken into the pedagogical underpinnings of the packages offered. They were therefore keen to answer two key questions: is the learning package being used appropriately? and is it an appropriate tool for the training and support of apprentices?

Amanda conducted the study in two parts, combining a series of site visits and interviews with BCITO training advisers and apprentices with an analysis of the modules that comprise the theoretical component of the qualification. Using Race's (1994) checklist of open learning materials to provide the pedagogical framework, she concentrated her analysis on two particular modules: one the apprentices found useful, 13004 Setting out a building; and one they considered difficult, 13013 Roof framing.

The study identified a diverse group of apprentices whose ability to successfully complete the apprenticeship was influenced greatly by their age and maturity; their level of literacy; the support they received from others, including their parents or partners; their level of motivation; the quality of the teaching and feedback they received from their employers; the relationship they had with their training adviser; and their understanding of how to learn.

Ruma Karaitiana, Chief Executive of BCITO, comments: "Dr Gilbert's study gives the BCITO a welcome starting point to further research as well as providing guidance on areas where improvements in processes and practices can be implemented immediately. It has provided timely input into the BCITO's review of how it supports learners in the workplace as well as insights into enhancements in the BCITO's ongoing resource development and review processes."

Dr Irina Elgort, a lecturer in academic development at the University Teaching Development Centre at VUW, has completed the first phase in developing *A Guide for eCollaboration in Learning, Teaching and Research*, which will assist teachers and researchers to select appropriate Integrated Control Technology (ICT) tools and technologies for remote collaborations. She has reviewed more than 100 studies into

academic collaborations, identified key types of processes and functions associated with these collaborations, and used her findings to develop a survey to collect further data on successful local and international collaborations.

Irina's literature review highlights the real benefits to be gained from successful collaboration, including cross-institutional learning collaborations and how technology is making it easier for researchers, teachers, and learners to work together at a distance.

However, the use of technology also introduces further complexities to the collaboration process and requires a new kind of awareness and new skills from the participants. These additional complexities and demands can be substantially reduced by training, and the eCollaboration project aims to do just that. The review also reinforces the fact that the process of collaboration itself needs the close attention of the parties involved.

You can access or download full copies of both reports from our website www.akooteaoroa.ac.nz



Whole of Organisation Approaches to Improving Teaching and Learning: the discussion paper

Ako Aotearoa has recently released a discussion paper *Whole of Organisation Approaches to Improving Teaching and Learning*. This paper was developed from the series of regional seminars that the centre hosted in partnership with the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand, the Tertiary Accord of New Zealand, and the two unions for tertiary academic staff, the Association of Staff in Tertiary Education and the Association of University Staff. These seminars were highlighted in the first issue of this newsletter.

Good and excellent practice is, more often than not, driven by the enthusiasm of individuals or a group of like-minded individuals rather than by the organisation as a whole. The key question is how organisations might build on this drive and expertise to develop a strategic approach to improving teaching and learning.

In developing these seminars, the steering group, in collaboration with both TEC and NZQA, made a deliberate attempt to create a new dynamic to the debate by inviting management staff and union members from major providers across the tertiary sector to participate. There was plenty of robust and constructive discussion as a result. The paper attempts to synthesise the common themes emerging from the three workshops and provide a platform for further debate.

So where do we go from here?

Firstly, I am optimistic that NZQA's new quality assurance proposals, based around self-assessment and external evaluation and review, will – if we get them right – provide a great platform for putting teaching and learning back on centre stage within tertiary organisations.

Secondly, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to this. Each organisation will have to address this within its own context and the needs of its communities and stakeholders. Nevertheless, whatever the strategic solutions are, in my view, they are likely to have several key ingredients:

- **Partnership:** Organisational strategies to improve teaching and learning will only be truly effective if they are developed and implemented in true partnership between the management of tertiary organisations and their staff.
- **Learner involvement:** We are good at getting student views, variably effective at using that information, and, in general, not particularly good at providing feedback to those whose views we've sought.
- **Priority on the governance agenda:** While councils/boards of tertiary education organisations are usually interested in these matters, few give them priority and systematic attention.
- **Clarity of purpose as an organisation:** Organisational development must be based on a shared understanding of the distinctive role of the organisation.
- **Identification of tangible benefits for the organisation:** How the organisation expects to benefit from such strategies needs to be clearly defined – it is by no means clear that such incentives are yet built into the new funding system; policy signals alone are not enough.
- **Professionalism:** An increased mutual understanding of what it means to be a professional in tertiary education is required – this applies equally to both academics and managers.
- **Evidence:** We need a stronger evidence base to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions we make: too often issues are decided on anecdote and myth.

Part of Ako Aotearoa's role is to support those organisations that are trying to make all this happen.

The discussion paper is available on our website www.ako.aotearoa.ac.nz

Ako Aotearoa conference sponsorship

New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers Conference
Private Tertiary Education – A New Era
2–4 September, Wellington
www.nzapep.co.nz/html/conference

eFest 2008 Connected Learning

8–10 September, Auckland
www.efest.org.nz

Eastern Institute of Technology Teaching and Learning Conference Student Success; A New Era in Ways of Learning

1–3 October, Hawke's Bay
www.eit.ac.nz/events/teaching_and_learning_conference.aspx

Te Toi Tauira mō Te Matariki Te Ao Hurihuri: Changing Dimensions of Tertiary Institutions

8–10 October, Manukau
www.manukau.ac.nz/initiatives/conference/matariki.asp

Symposium on Tertiary Assessment and Higher Education Student Outcomes Policy, Practice, and Research

17–19 November, Wellington
www.victoria.ac.nz/education/SYMPOSIUM/index.aspx

Spotlight on Tertiary Teaching and Learning

19–20 November, Dunedin
<http://hedc.otago.ac.nz/magnolia/spotlight/Welcome.html>

West Coast Tertiary Providers Forum Tertiary Teachers' Teaching and Learning Conference

27–28 November, Shantytown
<http://tppweb.ac.nz/events.php?ID=18>



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