

Engagement Position Paper

Introduction

The University is an outward looking partnering organisation. We engage day-to-day as part of our teaching, learning and research while at the same time we engage in high-level strategic partnerships and connections to work together with our broad range of valued communities. How we engage, and who we engage with, shapes our reputation and impacts our social licence.

Our thinking now is situated in rapidly evolving global trends outlined in the Context paper. These include geopolitical shifts, de-globalisation, nation-first politics, tighter borders, sustainability with a shift to self-sufficiency, a green agenda response to climate change and the current pandemic. Global trends in our own sector include failed funding models, structural reform, a challenge to the massification of education and international education, and student mobility refocusing on regions' closer to home countries.

We are acutely aware of mixed perceptions of the University. Some see us as elite and focused on rankings with an approach that “we know best”. Others have positive experiences through engaging with our researchers and public outreach. Our donors value the experience they have with us. We are seen by some to be transactional, inflexible and slow to respond but at the same time our agility is showcased. We are also seen as responsible and a safe pair of hands. We can be inspiring and innovative.

Some universities are beloved – their communities embrace them; we aspire to this. We want to be a deep and conscious partner with tangata whenua; to be known as a partner with a genuine interest in the knowledge, skills, expertise and learned experience of others; to be a partner that truly listens, is relevant and trusted. We want to be part of a shared legacy. We want to be seen to take a leadership role in a way that makes the world, not just ourselves, more equitable, more sustainable and more inclusive. Our University wants to be seen to embrace our communities and to co-create ideas by working together while willing to change and evolve.

Areas of Strategic Focus

A new strategic plan allows us to reflect on the duty, responsibility and service obligations we have to our city, region and nation. It also challenges us to consider what we want to achieve through partnership and engagement to support our strategic priorities for teaching, learning and research and deliver shared outcomes.

Engaging in Aotearoa and our region

Te Tiriti and our partnership with mana whenua, iwi Māori and shared values should be at the heart of our institution. Our distinctiveness in our education and research provision rests in our partnership with Māori, in our Pacific communities, in our socially and culturally diverse communities within Auckland, and amongst the region's innovative and ambitious businesses. Auckland is a highly diverse and segregated city. Our communities have diverse needs yet our response is patchy with glaring gaps.

University of Auckland graduates, research and innovation join industry to make Auckland city and region the country's economic powerhouse producing 38 percent of New Zealand's gross domestic product. We work with other anchor institutions to be relevant and increase the impact we can make for our shared communities.

Challenge questions

- How do we develop authentic relationships with mana whenua and iwi Māori, bringing vibrancy to our work together?
- How do we manifest Te Tiriti as our foundation and give expression to our partnership?
- How do we most effectively progress our relationships with Pacific communities?
- How do we work with our diverse communities at home and abroad to understand their social,

- cultural and economic needs and aspirations?
- What are our responses to the multiplicity of equity challenges facing Aotearoa New Zealand? How do we lead and work with others on these entrenched inequalities?
- How do we strengthen our industry and business connections? What do they value and what do we believe would make the biggest difference to benefit Aotearoa New Zealand, and the world?

Engaging internationally

Our success as an institution, in part, rests on our international outlook and engagement. We have long-term established relationships with global institutions at all levels of the University. Our academics, researchers and innovators are highly connected with their peers across the world, through their personal scholarship and formal university networks. However, our international operating environment grows in complexity day-by-day. Existential threats and heightened geopolitical tensions are significant factors impacting our capacity to engage internationally. In this context we will need to champion new ways of working with our international partners, including using digital platforms, to facilitate our mission. We will deepen and strengthen relationships with a select number of universities identified as strategic partners with whom we collaborate in research projects, teaching programmes and student activities.

Challenge questions

- In the context of current global mobility constraints, how can the University leverage our formal international partnerships into the future and support its researchers, teachers and students to engage with their global networks?
- What factors should shape our future strategic relationships with our Asia-Pacific region?

Engaging locally, engaging globally

Heading into the next decade and beyond, we aspire to be a University with both a strong international outlook and with a sense of service to our city, region and national communities. This contribution could manifest in nation building and in transforming the lives of people who live in New Zealand, particularly those who have been excluded from a university education and experience.

We see potential for strong interconnections between long-term committed engagement with our local communities and established global connections. Our local partnering can be enhanced in collaboration with international partners but in ways that have yet to be defined. One way of achieving this is through the lens of our teaching, learning, research and innovation or through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Whilst new forms of networks, articulations and collaborations with, for example, universities in Asia have emerged in recent times, it is imperative that we pursue greater diversification within a volatile global context.

Challenge questions

- What interconnections and synergies are there (actual and potential) between our local and international relationships? How are they mutually reinforcing?
- What duty do we have to our local, regional and national communities? How do we ensure we listen to these communities and are relevant to them?
- What are the new forms of networks and collaborations that might provide mechanisms for deeper engagement?

International education

International students have represented up to 20 percent of our student body. International students are of value to the University not just because they represent an economic opportunity, but also because they bring their talent and insights to our academic endeavour and our wider communities. Covid-19 is the most disruptive crisis in the history of the modern international education industry, creating uncertainty and also opportunity for a sector that was already undergoing significant change. Aotearoa New Zealand and our University now need to consider social licence, market diversification, trans-national education and cross border delivery, hybrid delivery, micro-credentials, employability and joint/dual PhDs. The Government is reviewing its international education strategy in the context of social licence and concern about the reliance on a few source countries for recruitment. There is increasing interest in online/digital delivery.

Challenge question

- How do we re-position international education as a manifestation of New Zealand's commitment to openness, international connectedness, global engagement and a counter to rising nationalism at home and abroad?

Alumni and donors

Universities stay connected with alumni, in large part to build a wide university network and to reach into their post-university communities. The University has 200,000 alumni within NZ and abroad. These alumni have a connection with us through dedicated years of study and research, which we must honour. Alumni are important supporters, influencers, donors and mentors. Our alumni and donors have different characteristics but they share a common interest and bond with the University. There are opportunities to bring these groups together to join with the University in our shared goals and ambitions for our community, our region and the world.

Challenge questions

- How can we partner with our alumni and donors on our shared goals and ambitions?
- How do we mature our alumni relationships to an enduring partnership connection at home and abroad?
- What do we do for alumni and what do they value? How do we create real value for them and bring them more centrally into our purpose?
- How do we move from a primarily 'one-size-fits-all' model to one that provides relevant engagement opportunities to diverse alumni in Aotearoa New Zealand and offshore?

Philanthropy

The University has raised more than half a billion dollars in two major campaigns over the last decade. Our donors are more audacious every year and expect more evidence of impact. We are thanking donors this year, reviewing lessons from the For All Our Futures campaign and considering strategies for the next few years including a new principal gifts operation, more use of big data, and the options for the next campaign.

Challenge questions

- What is the future of philanthropy for the university sector and us? What can we expect over the next five to ten years?
- Philanthropists increasingly want deeper engagement; how do we want to respond to this?