

LITERATURE REVIEW – HE AROTAKE TUHINGA

# He mahi e tika ana mō te tuku ā-ipurangi ki tāwāhi

Good practice for offshore online delivery

NZQA research project – January 2021

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**NZQA**

NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY  
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**Ko te manu ka kai i te miro, nōna  
te ngahere. Ko te manu ka kai i te  
mātauranga, nōna te ao.**

The bird that partakes of the berry,  
theirs is the forest. The bird that partakes  
of knowledge, theirs is the world.

(Te Kere Ngataierua, Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangī)

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# He kupu whakataki

## Introduction

The options for the education of international students are changing rapidly with an anticipated increase in the use of online delivery. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) wishes to promote good practice for online delivery to all students, including those international students outside of New Zealand.

This document provides a literature review and desktop research designed to inform this development. We then provide a selective stocktake of international guidelines and good practice tools in the same areas.

The literature review section focuses on recent, high level or meta-analyses of current trends and developments in the offshore delivery of particularly vocational education qualifications, and the pedagogy, assessment, learner support, professional development, and quality assurance of online delivery.

The summary is framed as a series of questions and considerations that may need to be taken into account for the development and prioritisation of good practice guidelines and tools.

# He rāpopototanga o ngā hua

## Key point summary

In considering what constitutes good practice for online and blended delivery of New Zealand qualifications to learners outside of New Zealand, this review has found the following.

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### New Zealand guidelines and tools

There is a comprehensive set of regulations, guidelines and tools to shape and inform good practice for offshore delivery of New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) qualifications and online learning especially to international students. What is missing is an acknowledgment of the special nature of offshore online learning, and a range of good practice tools and guidelines to support that delivery.

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### International guidelines and tools

The selected international guidelines and good practice tools have varying degrees of relevance to the New Zealand context. International guidelines at the least provide good 'checklists' to ensure coverage of the relevant areas. There is a marked similarity with New Zealand products across the domains or components for online delivery benchmarks and guidelines, with the differences mainly a matter of emphasis, and in the design of the supporting advice and materials for best utilising the tools.

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### Key points from the literature review

- The motivation of the learner for undertaking an online programme while offshore is crucial, as is the clarity and accuracy of the information available to them.
- A good learning experience requires: the learner to have a sense of self-efficacy and agency over their learning, an acknowledgment of the importance of interaction and connection for the learner, and an ecosystem of learner supports.
- While the role of the 'educator' remains key, there are varying models of instruction in the online environment, e.g., via resources, a facilitator, or a teacher. The extent to which online delivery is scalable appears to be more dependent on the model of delivery than the concept of 'educator to student' ratio.
- The move to online teaching and learning is driving new pedagogical approaches; but these are also sited in wider societal changes that are impacting on the structure of teaching and learning.
- Professional development must keep pace with both new delivery models and pedagogical changes, and aim to empower the educator to work in new ways.
- While technology 'opens' teaching and learning, removing time and geographical barriers, it also requires (and makes possible) innovative assessment models and poses challenges to the integrity and security of those assessments.
- Technology also enables a wider range of learning analytics to be collected. Carefully used, they can help to predict learner outcomes and inform learning design and interventions.
- Robust quality assurance is at the heart of maintaining the high-quality reputation, credibility, and international recognition of New Zealand qualifications.

# Horopaki

## Background

New Zealand's education of international students is in transition. The interest of providers in **innovative programme delivery methods to students, including international students outside of New Zealand**, has increased rapidly in part in response to border restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

NZQA's focus is on assuring the quality of education delivered to international and domestic students, whatever the mode of delivery including online or blended, and irrespective of where the students are based.

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### Aim

NZQA is looking to develop **products to promote good practice** for delivery particularly to international students outside of New Zealand.

These products will contribute to raising the quality of delivery of New Zealand credentials (including qualifications and micro-credentials) primarily offered online. The products may enable a wider range of credentials to be available and increase the opportunities for international students to gain a New Zealand credential, and potentially pathway to other credentials.

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### Context

New Zealand has signaled a transformation of international education through the International Education Strategy 2018–2030. While the strong focus of this strategy is international students studying in New Zealand, the potential of offshore online delivery is foreshadowed:

*New technologies and approaches may mean that education is delivered onshore, offshore, online and through a combination of these channels (International Education Strategy 2018–2033, August 2018, p.20).<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> <https://enz.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/International-Education-Strategy-2018-2030.pdf>

## Providers delivery offshore

The number of providers approved by NZQA to deliver offshore is relatively small with six providers approved in 2019 for offshore delivery that may have been online or in-person (often through an offshore partner). In 2020, 19 providers were granted approval to deliver 65 programmes offshore online and two programmes delivered through an offshore partner. Of those providers, five were Te Pūkenga subsidiaries, 13 were private training establishments and one was a transitional Industry Training Organisation.

Wanhill (2015), as part of an MBA research project, interviewed nine of New Zealand's (then) 18 ITPs. Eight of those were at the time delivering some sort of offshore vocational education and training, with the ninth planning to resume offshore delivery in the near future. Five were delivering in Asia and three in the Pacific. Delivery models included partnerships, twinning, split delivery, cross-crediting, supported delivery and train the trainer programmes, with some programmes having fly in-fly out teaching staff (p.28).<sup>2</sup>

While this review focuses on **online** offshore delivery, it is important to note the range of delivery models mentioned above. Each of these models imply a relationship with an institution or body in the country of delivery, which does not necessarily appear to be the case with online delivery to offshore students.

## Offshore students

Currently separate data are not collected on offshore students. The Ministry of Education suggested in 2017 that it was possible to 'identify, measure and report on offshore enrolments using other existing fields' (NZQA, 2017, p.5). It would be useful if such a report could be generated for the last few years, to provide baseline data given the potential expansion of this type of student. This thinking is supported in an Australian report.

*Shared access to reliable, comprehensive and meaningful data that provides an accurate understanding of student numbers, provider activity and sector-wide trends is essential for the effective treatment of risk in international education (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2019, p.3).*

2 <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10063/4936/paper.pdf?sequence=1>

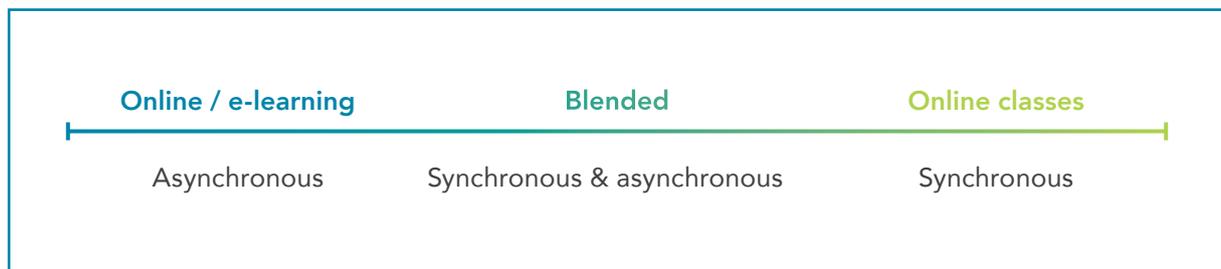
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## Terminology

There are a multiplicity of terms and definitions for what is referred to above as 'online delivery'. Pertinent to this review, NZQA provides this definition of the *distance online* mode of delivery:

*Delivery through an online learning management system [LMS] which may include but is not limited to webinars / virtual lectures (recorded or live), online tutorials and discussions (synchronous or asynchronous), individual and group work (synchronous or otherwise via online fora and chats). (Note: in some literature and jurisdictions, it is also referred to as digital learning, e-learning, remote learning, online learning, web-based learning, extra mural or virtual learning).<sup>3</sup>*

Technology-enabled learning (TEL) is a useful 'catch-all' for a range of approaches as shown on this continuum, developed by Alkema (2020).



- **Online / e-learning** seem to be terms that are used interchangeably. It is learning that is supported and delivered through the use of ICT and computer related technologies.
- **Blended learning** is the combination of web-based technologies and face-to-face teaching. It is also referred to as hybrid learning. It can offer richer learning experiences than either mode on their own. At its simplest, blended learning is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences. There is considerable intuitive appeal to the concept of integrating the strengths of synchronous (face-to-face) and asynchronous (text-based Internet) learning activities. At the same time, there is considerable complexity in its implementation with the challenge of virtually limitless design possibilities and applicability to so many contexts (Li, Kay, & Markovich, 2018, p.3).
- **Online classrooms** are those that happen in real time whereby the teacher and students interact with each other. This includes teacher-to-student interaction and student-to-student interaction in digital breakout rooms.

Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, et al., (2020) delineate further, suggesting that online learning is learning that is mediated by the internet, while e-learning includes a full range of digital tools and resources (p.924). They further explore the varied meanings of 'online' learning, arguing that 'in our postdigital reality... 'online' is ceasing to be a helpful descriptor for students' actual experiences' as the 'boundaries between learning and other strands of activity in everyday life have become so soft' (p.924).

For the purpose of this review, and echoing NZQA's focus, we will use the term **online delivery**, with the understanding that it encompasses the wide range of technology-enabled teaching and learning formats.

3 <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Registration-and-accreditation/distance-online-delivery.pdf>, p.1.

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## Research question

What constitutes good practice for online and blended delivery of NZ qualifications, particularly for vocational education, to learners outside of New Zealand?

Areas of interest:

- Teaching and learning
- Assessment
- Technology
- Pastoral care

# Tukanga

## Method

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### The literature

This literature review has been carried out to inform the development of products to promote good practice for online delivery to international students outside of New Zealand. While there is a good amount of literature on offshore<sup>4</sup> provision of higher education, the provision of vocational or lower-level<sup>5</sup> education offshore is considered to be 'in its infancy' (Pimpa, 2019, p.18) and the 'research literature on the experiences of offshore VET students is limited' (Brown et al., 2018, p.34).

The review will thus focus on:

- Documents that currently guide good practice (for both international students and online delivery) in New Zealand.
- Documents that guide good practice in other countries, focusing on countries with a similar profile of delivery to international students as New Zealand.
- Recent, high level or meta-analyses of current trends and developments in the offshore delivery of lower-level qualifications, and the pedagogy, assessment, learner support, professional development, and quality assurance of online delivery.

### Search parameters

The Google Scholar database was searched using the terms: transnational; offshore; cross-border; technical and vocational education; vocational education and training; online learning; technology-enabled learning.

The material was limited to regulations and guidelines from the mid-2000s onwards, and literature published over the last four to five years and available electronically. Unless otherwise stated, all electronic materials were sourced between 4–29 January 2021. Once sourced, each piece of literature was key-word-searched for information related to topic areas. Following this a snowball method was applied whereby the reference lists of publications were checked for additional sources.

4 Also called transnational or cross-border.

5 This work focuses on Levels 1–6 of the NZQF, but the closest encompassing terms in the international literature are vocational educational and training (VET) or technical and vocational education (TVET).

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## Scope

Topics **within scope** include:

**Table 1: Topics within scope for this literature review**

<b>Pedagogy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate modes of teaching (e.g., real-time versus asynchronous approaches).</li><li>• Scalability (facilitator-learner ratio).</li><li>• Designing learning activities appropriate for the online.</li><li>• Environments that engage learners.</li><li>• Interactive and engaging resources and activities for students.</li><li>• Instructional design.</li><li>• Learning theories for online education.</li><li>• Effectively delivering practical elements of learning.</li></ul>
<b>Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate modes of assessment.</li><li>• Academic integrity (including tools such as proctoring software, biometric tools, keystroke analysis, anti-plagiarism software and prevention of contract cheating).</li></ul>
<b>Effective use of technology to support online learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effectively using learning management systems to support different teaching activities (i.e., formative assessments, use of different multimedia resources, communication, facilitation of group activities, etc.)</li><li>• Learning analytics.</li></ul>
<b>Professional development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher/facilitator upskilling and support.</li></ul>
<b>Quality assurance practices</b>	

The following topics are **out of scope**:

- the marketing and attraction of international students
- qualification recognition.

## 5

# He aha kē ngā tohutohu / ngā rauemi pai e tika ana kia mahia i ēnei wāhanga?

What guidelines / good practice tools already inform activity in these areas?

A range of regulatory mechanisms, guidelines, codes of practices, and strategic documents currently govern the quality of education delivered to international students by New Zealand education organisations. There is also a specific set of rules for offshore delivery and a range of guidelines for online delivery.

In accordance with a key principle of adult education, that is, 'starting from where you are', we will assume that the current regulatory and guidance regime is sound, evidence-based and well-subscribed, and should therefore be relevant and easily adapted to provide guidance for online delivery for offshore learners.

The table below summarises the main components of the current regime, which are then each discussed in greater detail.

**Table 2: Main components of current regulatory and guidance regime**

		
International education	Offshore programme delivery	Online delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Zealand International Education Strategy 2018–2033, August 2018</li> <li>• Guidelines for the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016 (including 2019 amendments)</li> <li>• NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation<sup>6</sup> (PAA) and Training Scheme<sup>7</sup> (TS) Rules</li> <li>• NZQA’s quality assurance system for tertiary education organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NZQF Offshore Programme Delivery Rules 2021 (v2)<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Guidelines to the implementation of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework Offshore Programme Delivery Rules <i>for organisations other than universities</i><sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Online assessment: guidance for providers<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance online delivery, NZQA. September 2020</li> <li>• e-learning Guidelines (last updated 2019), Ako Aotearoa</li> <li>• e-learning in Tertiary Education   Highlights from Ako Aotearoa supported research, (Ako Aotearoa, 2016)</li> <li>• Professional Development for e-learning: A Framework for the New Zealand tertiary education sector, MoE, 2008</li> <li>• <i>e-learning Maturity Model</i> (Marshall, 2006)</li> </ul>

6 <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/approval-accreditation-and-registration/programme-approval-and-provider-accreditation/>

7 <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/approval-accreditation-and-registration/training-scheme-approval/#heading2-0>

8 <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/nzqf-related-rules/offshore-programme-delivery-rules/>

9 <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Offshore-delivery/guidelines-offshore-delivery.pdf>

10 <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/monitoring-and-assessment/online-assessment>



## **International education**

### **New Zealand International Education Strategy 2018–2033, August 2018<sup>11</sup>**

As mentioned in the introduction, this strategy is the guiding document for international education in New Zealand, with a vision of ‘a thriving and globally connected New Zealand through world-class education’. It is difficult to imagine a more fundamental challenge to the basis of this strategy than a global pandemic; but COVID-19 may certainly provide a catalyst for the transformation of international education sought in the strategy.

### **Guidelines for the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016 (including 2019 amendments)<sup>12</sup>**

This code makes sure international students are well informed, safe, and properly cared for throughout their studies in New Zealand. The Code of Practice has recently been updated to incorporate several changes, and now includes offshore students as well as those located in New Zealand.

### **NZQF / NZQA regulatory requirements**

All programmes leading to all or part of a NZQF qualification must meet standard programme approval rules and providers must satisfy NZQA’s quality assurance requirements.

11 <https://enz.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/International-Education-Strategy-2018-2030.pdf>

12 <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Code-of-Practice/guidelines-code-of-practice-2019.pdf>



## Offshore programme delivery

### **Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021 and the Offshore Programme Delivery Rules 2021**

All New Zealand tertiary education organisations (TEOs) must comply with these rules for approval to deliver a programme offshore that leads to a qualification listed on the NZQF. Only universities and category 1 and 2 tertiary education organisations (TEOs) may apply for approval and accreditation to deliver offshore.

### **Guidelines to the implementation of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework Offshore Programme Delivery Rules for organisations other than universities, NZQA, Version 2.1 Jan 2018**

This provides guidance for non-university TEOs, Te Pūkenga, wānanga, government training establishments and private training establishments on applying for offshore programme approval and accreditation.

**Online assessment: guidance for providers** is also available.



## Online delivery

### **Distance online delivery, NZQA, September 2020**

The aim of this document is to provide general support and advice to tertiary education organisations (TEOs) where the mode of delivery is *distance online (onshore and offshore)*. For each of the following areas, key questions, NZQF rules, and examples of what constitutes good evidence are provided:

- Strategic direction
- Financial and physical resources
- Curriculum design and delivery
- Assessments and moderation
- Staffing
- Support (student and staff)
- Quality assurance
- Mode of delivery: distance online – offshore only.

There are significant areas of alignment with components of the Code of Practice discussed above.

## **E-learning Guidelines, Ako Aotearoa, updated 2019**

This Ako Aotearoa-funded project led by New Zealand Tertiary College developed e-learning guidelines to assist the tertiary sector in its engagement with e-learning.<sup>13</sup> The guidelines assist the designing, implementing and enhancing of practice to ensure thoughtful and intentional e-learning provision and, while they do not specifically cover offshore teaching and learning, the principles on which they are based are equally applicable for offshore delivery.

The guidelines offer prompts for reflection from five perspectives – the learner, teacher, manager, organisational leader and quality assurance body. They were updated in 2019, providing a framework for integrating diverse pedagogies, guiding professional practice, enhancing quality, and bringing coherence to the delivery of eTeaching and e-learning. The guidelines contain exhaustive references for each of the perspectives and there are also workbooks with reflective questions for each perspective.<sup>14</sup>

## **E-learning in Tertiary Education: Highlights from Ako Aotearoa supported research, Ako Aotearoa, 2016<sup>15</sup>**

While not guidelines as such this report, prepared by Marshall and Shepherd for Ako Aotearoa, provides a synthesis of the outcomes from thirty-eight Ako Aotearoa projects, funded from 2008 to 2016, which engaged with the diverse implications of technology for New Zealand tertiary education. Of particular relevance to this work are the sections that deal with:

- Organisational implications of e-learning
- Learner support, engagement and retention
- E-learning case studies and examples
- Selecting e-learning technologies.

Some of these projects are discussed in greater detail in the appropriate area of section 7 of this review.

## **Professional Development for e-Learning: A Framework for the New Zealand Tertiary Education Sector, MoE, 2008<sup>16</sup>**

While somewhat dated, this extensive research project does provide an e-learning professional development framework for TEOs to consider. The framework<sup>17</sup> components are:

1. Identifying the need for professional development for e-learning
2. Finding appropriate incentives for professional development for e-learning
3. Providing appropriate opportunities for professional development for e-learning
4. Achieving engagement with e-learning
5. Evaluating the success of professional development for e-learning

13 <https://www.elg.ac.nz/2019-elearning-guidelines-update>

14 <https://www.elg.ac.nz/resource/perspective-workbooks>

15 <https://ako.ac.nz/assets/Reports/Synthesis-reports/SYNTHESIS-REPORT-e-Learning-in-tertiary-Education-Highlights-from-Ako-Aotearoa-supported-research.pdf>

16 <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/e-Learning/58020>

17 [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/58349/ShephardPartFAframeworkforPDforelearningFinal2.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/58349/ShephardPartFAframeworkforPDforelearningFinal2.pdf)

## The e-learning Maturity Model (Marshall, 2006)

This is a quality improvement framework designed to support educational institutions interested in improving their organisational capability to use technology in learning and teaching in a complex and changing environment.<sup>18</sup>



### Discussion: New Zealand regulations and guidelines

There appears to be no shortage of regulations and guidelines to shape and inform good practice for international students, offshore delivery of NZQF qualifications or online learning. What is missing is an acknowledgment of the special nature of online learning delivered to students off-shore, and a range of good practice tools and guidelines to support that delivery. Online delivery to students off-shore seems set to increase and some of the benefits and risks of this were summarised in a NZQA Aide-Mémoire, dated 7 April 2020:

- Benefits:
  - Maintenance of a pipeline of international students
  - Supports the transformation / new market agenda for export education
  - Incentivises innovation.
- Risks:
  - Will attract fewer students from countries where student visa pathways to work and residency are paramount
  - Delivery may not be in line with programme approval
  - Quality and authenticity of assessment.

Nonetheless, as well as the existing regulations and guidelines, there are providers operating in, or near to, the online offshore delivery space and it would make sense to draw on their expertise and advice. For example:

- TEOs who recently moved to online offshore delivery responding to the border closure in 2020.
- TEOs who have a history of and who currently offer online offshore delivery, e.g.,
  - The Open Polytechnic (offered on the Open Polytechnic website)
  - New Zealand Tertiary College (enrolled around 90 offshore online students in 2017, in teacher education).

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ascilite.org/conferences/sydney13/program/papers/Marshall.pdf>

- International students can study online offshore at Massey University. Massey University is a member of the Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-learning (ACODE) and an accredited distance university by the International Association for Distance Learning.<sup>19</sup> As at January 2017, Massey University had over 3,400 offshore students, and growth in this area is considered 'high priority':

*The Massey University Internationalisation Framework 2017–2025 supports and considers 'high priority' imperatives, those international initiatives... that drive growth of the offshore student body, including through new and existing teaching collaborations and partnerships.*<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> This organisation does not appear to currently have a website.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/International%20Students/Documents/Massey-University-Internationalisation-Framework-2017-to-2025.pdf?A21102473736E2E58014684394D3682F>.

# He aha atu ngā tohutohu / ngā rauemi pai hei whakaharatau?

What other guidelines /  
good practice tools exist?

In this section, we provide a selective stocktake of international guidelines / good practice tools.



## Offshore education

### Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education (2005)<sup>21</sup>

Jointly developed by UNESCO and OECD, these guidelines aim to provide an international framework to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision and disreputable providers. The guidelines aim to sustain the development of quality cross-border higher education that meets human, social, economic and cultural needs. Specific recommendations include:

- An invitation to **governments** to establish comprehensive systems of quality assurance and accreditation for cross-border higher education, recognising that this involves both sending and receiving countries.
- An invitation to **higher education institutions and providers** to ensure that the programmes they deliver across borders and in their home country are of comparable quality and that they also take into account the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the receiving country.
- An invitation to **student bodies** to get involved as active partners at international, national and institutional levels in the development, monitoring and maintenance of the quality provision of cross-border higher education.

While focusing on higher education, the overarching strategic level of the advice is also pertinent for lower-level programmes. The extent of compliance with the guidelines was monitored via country surveys in 2010 and 2014, with New Zealand performing reasonably well across many of the indicators.<sup>22</sup>

In a similar vein is the Council of Europe's **Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001)**.<sup>23</sup>

21 <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/35779480.pdf>

22 <http://www.oecd.org/education/ensuring-quality-in-cross-border-higher-education-9789264243538-en.htm>

23 [https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice\\_EN.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice_EN.asp)

**Good Practice in Offshore Delivery: A guide for Australian providers, prepared by the International Education Association of Australia for the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, June 2008.<sup>24</sup>**

This Guide aims to assist Australian practitioners in transnational education (TNE) in all education sectors to achieve good practice in transnational delivery of their education programs. The Guide supports transnational education providers in the planning, delivery, evaluation and management of educational programs offshore. Seven broad topics are covered:

- Introduction to Australian transnational education
- Equivalence and comparability
- Quality management systems
- Business management
- Relationship management
- Learning, teaching and the student experience
- Staffing and professional development.

This guide is extensive but clearly set out, with accessible key messages and summaries. It uses excerpts from case studies and good practice projects to provide practical guidance, and includes the following salient rider:

*If the Guide has one primary theme or message, it is that 'off the shelf' examples of good practice in transnational delivery are not likely to be either valid or useful. Practitioners (and their institutions) need first to reflect, then carefully consider and subsequently tailor the relevant good practice examples and resources provided through the Guide to their unique circumstances (p.vii).*

**Strategy for the regulation of offshore delivery of vocational education and training by Australian registered organisations 2014–2016**

In 2014, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) released this strategy, which sought to manage the risks posed by offshore VET delivery. In 2015, ASQA conducted an offshore audit pilot with four face-to-face programmes, based on the strategy.<sup>25</sup> Each of the Registered Training Organisations (RTO) audited demonstrated compliance with the standards by the end of the audit process. During the audit, opportunities for improvement were identified:

- Record keeping
- Assessment tools – ensuring these satisfied the principles of assessment and rules of evidence
- Partnership agreements – ensuring that partnership agreements specified the requirements for complying with the Standards
- Satisfying local cultural values – without compromising compliance with the Standards.

24 <https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A5895>

25 [https://www.asqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Regulating\\_offshore\\_delivery\\_of\\_VET\\_-\\_ASQAs\\_2015\\_pilot\\_audit\\_program.pdf](https://www.asqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Regulating_offshore_delivery_of_VET_-_ASQAs_2015_pilot_audit_program.pdf)

## Protecting the quality of international VET and English language education ASQA, 2019

A further review was carried out in 2019,<sup>26</sup> In terms of online offshore delivery, the review cautions:

*The delivery of VET courses online to offshore students also raises a number of risks primarily related to whether the expected competencies are achievable and validly assessable in the e-learning environment. RTOs need to ensure that students have the capability to engage in this form of learning and that they are offered appropriate support to successfully complete their courses. RTOs also need to ensure that the identity of the learner is verified and that assessments are valid.*

This review also contains a comparison of the Australian and New Zealand Codes of Practice for international students (pp.141–145).



### Online delivery

#### **Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-learning (ACODE): Benchmarks for Technology Enhanced Learning (last updated 2014) and associated Framework<sup>27</sup>**

The ACODE benchmarks were developed to assist institutions in their practice of delivering a quality technology enhanced learning (TEL) experience for their students and staff. The benchmarks were originally developed in 2007. They were developed collaboratively by representatives of a number of ACODE member universities and at the time were independently reviewed by Professor Paul Bacsich, a UK consultant specialising in benchmarking and historical aspects of e-learning. More recently (2014) the benchmarks have undergone a major review to ensure they were both current and forward-looking.

There are eight benchmarks, each of which can be used as a standalone indicator, or used collectively to provide a whole of institution perspective. It is suggested that the benchmarks become even more powerful when they are used in association with other institutions, as part of a collaborative benchmarking exercise.

The benchmarks cover the following eight topic areas:

- Institution-wide policy and governance for TEL
- Planning for institution-wide quality improvement of TEL
- Information technology systems, services and support for TEL
- The application of TEL services
- Staff professional development for the effective use of TEL
- Staff support for the use of TEL
- Student training for the effective use of TEL
- Student support for the use of TEL.

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.asqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Strategic%20review%20report%202019%20Protecting%20the%20quality%20of%20international%20VET%20and%20English%20language%20education\\_0.pdf](https://www.asqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Strategic%20review%20report%202019%20Protecting%20the%20quality%20of%20international%20VET%20and%20English%20language%20education_0.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.acode.edu.au/pluginfile.php/550/mod\\_resource/content/8/TEL\\_Benchmarks.pdf](https://www.acode.edu.au/pluginfile.php/550/mod_resource/content/8/TEL_Benchmarks.pdf)

Each of the above benchmarks includes a Scoping Statement, a Good Practice Statement, a set of Performance Indicators (PIs) and Performance Measures – on a 5-point scale. A TEL Framework institutional template, including resource links, is also available.<sup>28</sup>

### **Australian Skills Quality Authority (n.d): Distance learning – Information for VET providers on how to stay compliant when adopting distance learning options<sup>29</sup>**

This webpage provides succinct and clear information, with additional resources, for online VET provision compliance.

### **Opportunity through Online Learning: National Guidelines, March 2016, Dr Cathy Stone, NCSEHE & The University of Newcastle<sup>30</sup>**

These clear and concise guidelines focus on improving student outcomes in online learning, particularly in terms of retention and course completion rates. The *Guidelines* have been developed from education practitioners working in online education at 16 different higher education institutions, 15 in Australia as well as the Open University UK.

Included are practical examples for institutions of how each guideline can be translated into action. Examples of resources are included beneath each guideline. The guidelines are:

1. **Know who the students are**
2. **Develop, implement and regularly review institution-wide quality standards for delivery of online education**
3. **Intervene early to address student expectations, build skills and engagement** – early contact and interventions with students, both pre- and post-enrolment enable an institution to: explore student expectations; provide a realistic picture of online study; facilitate appropriate academic preparation; improve early engagement; and build a sense of belonging to a learning community
4. **Explicitly value and support the vital role of ‘teacher-presence’** – online teachers are absolutely crucial in building teacher-student and student-student relationships. A strong teacher-presence provides online students with a sense of belonging, helping them to feel connected to a community of learning and increasing their likelihood of persisting
5. **Design for online** – education delivery needs to be designed for online first and foremost
6. **Engage and support through content and delivery** – ‘interactive’, ‘connected’, ‘inclusive’ and ‘relevant’ are all essential criteria for online learning content and teaching strategies, using a range of appropriate technologies, both synchronous and asynchronous, that are specific to online delivery
7. **Build collaboration across campus to offer holistic, integrated and embedded student support**
8. **Contact and communicate throughout the student journey**
9. **Use learning analytics to target and personalise student interventions**
10. **Invest in online education to ensure access and opportunity.**

28 [https://www.acode.edu.au/pluginfile.php/3295/mod\\_page/content/9/ACODE%20TEL%20Framework%20Pilot%20Version.pdf](https://www.acode.edu.au/pluginfile.php/3295/mod_page/content/9/ACODE%20TEL%20Framework%20Pilot%20Version.pdf)

29 <https://www.asqa.gov.au/distance-learning>

30 [https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/CathyStone\\_NATIONAL-GUIDELINES.pdf](https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/CathyStone_NATIONAL-GUIDELINES.pdf)

## **Supporting and engaging students in an online environment – Looking at the evidence, July 2020**

Dr Stone discussed the relevance of these guidelines in the current environment in a TEC webinar, stating that what students most appreciate in the online environment is:

- engagement and sense of connection with their online lecturer/tutor
- well-designed materials
- relevant and timely support
- flexibility.<sup>31</sup>

The webinar also contains a useful graphic representation of the Student Engagement Cycle for open online delivery (Stone, Hewitt & Morelli, 2013).

## **Quality Assurance of Online Learning Toolkit, 2019 APEC Secretariat<sup>32</sup>**

This toolkit was developed in response to the growth of online and blended education in higher education in APEC economies over the last decade. The toolkit is informed by current and emerging research into institutional practices for online and blended education and also considers a broad suite of frameworks, rubrics, assessment criteria, and systems for the quality assurance of higher education.

The toolkit is based on nine quality domains, with each domain having a principle statement, a summary of research findings, focus points for the institution to consider and a description of evidence that demonstrates the application of the principle in practice. Case studies and examples are interspersed in each domain. The domains are:

1. Leadership and management
2. Staffing profile and professional development
3. Review and improvement
4. Resources
5. Student information and support
6. Student experience
7. Curriculum design
8. Assessment and integrity
9. Learning outcomes.

31 <https://www.tec.govt.nz/assets/Forms-templates-and-guides/Supporting-and-engaging-students-in-an-online-environment-Cathy-Stone.pdf>

32 <https://www.apec.org/Publications/2019/12/APEC-Quality-Assurance-of-Online-Learning-Toolkit>



## **Discussion: International guidelines and good practice tools**

These international guidelines and good practice tools each have varying degrees of relevance to what might be useful in the New Zealand context. The international codes of practice for offshore delivery are high level, with a focus on higher education, while the Australian context is quite different to what appears to be developing in New Zealand, i.e. the Australian programmes appear to be largely physically delivered offshore. Nonetheless, the components provide good 'checklists' to ensure that any tools developed in the New Zealand context cover all the relevant areas.

In terms of the online delivery benchmarks and guidelines, there is marked similarity across the domains or components of each, and at their core these are also the key components of face-to-face delivery. The differences are mainly in matter of emphasis, and the design of the supporting advice and materials for best utilising the tools.

Some of the key themes that emerged for the design and effective use of tools like those discussed above include:

- Design:
  - Build in some evaluative activities and rubrics
  - Provide a maturation framework / performance indicators
  - Provide case studies or vignettes illustrating good practice in action
  - Ensure they are strongly evidence-based.
- Usage:
  - Consider cross-organisation collaboration to strengthen the value of any outcomes from tool usage
  - Consider carefully the context of the organisation and develop a deep understanding of which aspects of any tool are relevant to that organisation
  - In line with this, focus on only the key areas of relevance; where the most impact can be made.

# He aha ngā hua o te tuhinga nei?

## What does the literature tell us?

In this section, we discuss themes emerging from a review of recent, high level or meta-analyses of current trends and developments in the offshore delivery of qualifications, and the pedagogy, assessment, learner support, professional development, and quality assurance of online delivery.

Of course, late 2020 saw a proliferation of articles dealing with how governments and educators have responded to the changes wrought by COVID-19. A number of these have been very pertinent to this review, describing the acceleration of change brought about by the 'emergency response' to the pandemic.<sup>33</sup> We have, however, focused more on wider trends, developments and theoretical debates that were already happening, in the hope that discussing these will support transformative, rather than reactive, good practice guidelines and tools.

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### Putting the learner at the centre

#### What might motivate a learner to enrol in a qualification delivered offshore?

At the heart of understanding what might constitute good practice in offshore online programme delivery is to consider what factors might motivate a learner to enrol in that programme. Personal experience gained while being an external monitor for a heavily vocational degree programme revealed three main motivations for the international students who were enrolled in that programme:

- the qualification and skills gained were a potential pathway to work and hopefully residency in New Zealand
- the qualification was very well regarded in the students' home country, or
- the student was part of an international aid or government-sponsored initiative.

Brown, Buttress and Matthews (2018), in a study of Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) offshore students, found that the (limited) literature in the area of offshore VET suggested that the: "factors influencing 'onshore' international students may overlap with, but are distinct from, those influencing students enrolled in an international qualification 'offshore' at home" (p.34.) Goode (2018) echoes the lack of literature: 'there has been very limited research into the value of transnational education for the learners themselves' (p.10).

33 See (for example): <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/student-experience-of-online-learning-in-australian-he-during-covid-19.pdf?v=1606953179>

In a report on 'The Changing Fortunes of Australian Transnational Higher Education', Banks et al., (2010) identified a series of drivers for enrolling in offshore (higher) education from the students' perspective:

- Poor access to quality tertiary education at home
- Desire for affordable quality foreign education
- Course not available at local institutions
- Desire to study part time – option not available at local institutions
- Cheaper compared to studying abroad.

Of course, the main motivation for enrolment may simply be access. Providing learning opportunities through technology has a number of advantages that are well canvassed in the literature including flexibility, convenience, and access to learning opportunities that mean learners have more choice about what, when and where they study (Alkema & Neal, 2019; Comer, Lenaghan, & Sengupta, 2015; Covelli, 2017; Knightley, 2007; Panda, 2020; Stone, 2017). However, the overall approach must be student-centred and Yates, Brindley-Richards and Thistoll, (2014, p.39) stress the need to pay attention to, 'the mix of the human and the technological'.

### **What information and support does the learner need at pre-enrolment and enrolment?**

Clear and accurate information is vital for any learner considering enrolling in a programme of study but it is particularly crucial when the programme is to be delivered online by an offshore provider:

*The pre-enrolment and enrolment stages are important in ensuring that individuals are enrolling in the most appropriate course for them and that their expectations are realistic (Griffin & Mihelic. 2019, p.56).*

The marketing of programmes is outside of the scope of this project, but it would behoove institutions to be extremely careful with how online programmes are 'sold' and to also provide very explicit information to any education agents working on their behalf.

Qualifications gained via distance learning are not universally recognised. In India, for example, 'with its own large-scale distance learning provision, no foreign distance learning is recognised; whilst in Oman, only certain international institutions are recognised for distance learning' (UK NARIC, 2020, p.5). When programmes are assessed under the NZQF Offshore Delivery Rules 2012, there is a requirement that student information includes details about where the qualifications gained will be recognised.<sup>34</sup>

New Zealand Tertiary College provides a good example of high-level information, particularly about entry requirements for New Zealand (in the pre-COVID-19 environment):

<http://nztcglobal.com/prospective-students/study-options>

34 N. Sutton, NZQA, personal communication, Jan 2021.

### **What level of learner agency will the learner require for successful online offshore learning and how will this be developed through the programme?**

Sitting beneath the opportunities to learn via online delivery rest enablers in terms of agency, beliefs about learning, dispositions, skills and knowledge learners bring. This starts with the motivation, readiness and sense of comfort adults have with learning through technology, the disposition they have towards this form of learning, and the extent to which they have a sense of self efficacy and agency over their learning (Comer et al., 2015; Hutchinson, 2016; Litster et al., 2014).

Blaschke (2019) argues that 'with its rich history of educating self-directed adults, online and distance education is uniquely positioned to lead the way in using technology for developing lifelong and self-determined learners'. She also provides an excellent summary of the 'self' pedagogies such as self-efficacy, self-determination, and self-directed (andragogy), self-regulated, and self-determined (heutagogy) learning and identifies practical ways of applying the concepts in online learning (Blaschke, 2018).

### **How will the learner interact with teachers and other students?**

Covelli (2017) notes learners need interaction with others – learners and teachers, given that online learning can be lonely. Li, Kay & Markovich's (2018) study found interaction with others was a critical factor for student learning. These interactions can happen synchronously, face-to-face online or by phone, or asynchronously through emails and discussion boards. These approaches acknowledge that learning is both a social and cognitive process (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020, March 27).

This idea is further promoted by Khoo and Cowie (2010) who found that peer interaction and collaboration in post-graduate education led to greater knowledge and understanding than would it have been possible by individuals on their own. These researchers also talk about the need for authentic contexts to engage learners.

### **What ongoing support will the learner require?**

The overwhelming theme to come through in the literature is the educator is key – both for content and connection with learners. In higher education, Jeffrey et al., (2012) report the creation of learning experiences are the single most important determinant of the quality of the learning environment. Stone (2020, July 3; 2017) and Hughes (2020, June 19) emphasise the role of the educator in the engagement process. Here it is about getting to know the learner, making regular contact and offering relevant and timely support. They also report that when educators are engaging, learners are more likely to engage with each other.

Ultimately, effective online education requires an investment in an ecosystem of learner supports, which take time to identify and build. Relative to other options simple online content delivery can be quick and inexpensive, but confusing this with robust online education is akin to confusing lectures with the totality of residential education (Hodges, et al., 2020, March 27).

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## Teaching and learning: pedagogy for online delivery

*Transformational, learner-centered philosophies should be at the heart of technology-enabled learning (Kanwar, Balasubramanain & Carr, 2019).*

Rather than considering the pedagogy of online learning independently, teachonline.ca (2020, August 4) argues that the burgeoning of online learning (accelerated by COVID-19) is **contributing** to the development of a new pedagogy. This new way of thinking about teaching and learning has been triggered by the demands of a knowledge-based society, new student expectations, new technologies and the fast-changing world of work, resulting in significant changes to the structure of teaching, and how and when learning happens. Three pedagogical trends emerging from these changes are:

- A move to opening up learning, making it more accessible and flexible. The classroom with information delivered through a lecture is no longer the unique centre of learning.
- An increased sharing of power between the instructor and the student. This is manifest as a changing instructional role, towards more support and negotiation over content and methods, and a focus on developing and supporting student autonomy. On the student side, this can mean an emphasis on students supporting each other through new social media, peer assessment, discussion groups, even online study groups but with guidance, support and feedback from learning and content experts.
- An increased use of technology, not only to deliver teaching, but also to support and assist students and to provide new forms of student assessment.<sup>35</sup>

The *FUTURA (Future of University Teaching: Update and a Roadmap for Advancement)* project, aimed to provide a 'roadmap' to inform strategic planning for the future of online and blended higher education (Guàrdia, Witthaus, Padilla & Girona, 2016).<sup>36</sup> This led to the development of a five-part framework for describing next-generation pedagogy:

- **Intelligent pedagogy** is an approach to teaching in which technology is used to enhance the learning experience. Examples include using learning analytics to support course leaders in curriculum design decisions as well as to help students manage their learning.
- **Distributed pedagogy** refers to shared or distributed ownership of different elements of the learning journey by different stakeholders in the process.
- **Engaging pedagogy** is an approach to curriculum design and delivery in which learners are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process.
- **Agile pedagogy** refers to flexibility and customisation of the curriculum and the student experience, e.g., personalised learning pathways and individualised support for learners, and support for virtual mobility of students and internationalisation of the curriculum.
- **Situated pedagogy** encompasses the idea of contextualisation of learning and emphasises the need for curricula with real-world relevance. It expands work-related learning opportunities for students and supports students in identifying and addressing "big issues" in industry, government, and society through project- and problem-based learning.

35 <https://teachonline.ca/tools-trends/how-teach-online-student-success/new-pedagogy-emerging-and-online-learning-key-contributing-factor>

36 [http://openaccess.uoc.edu/webapps/o2/bitstream/10609/51441/1/Next\\_Generation\\_Pedagogy.pdf](http://openaccess.uoc.edu/webapps/o2/bitstream/10609/51441/1/Next_Generation_Pedagogy.pdf)

In a review of 47 published studies and research on online teaching and learning from 2008, which focused on how theories, practices and assessments apply to the online learning environment, Sun and Chen (2016)<sup>37</sup> argue that effective online instruction is dependent upon:

- well-designed course content, motivated interaction between the instructor and learners, well-prepared and fully-supported instructors;
- creation of a sense of online learning community;
- and rapid advancement of technology (p.157).

The authors summarise the factors that have proved to be effective in online teaching and learning. Following Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2009), who introduced the Community of Inquiry model, comprising three presences – cognitive presence, teaching presence and social presence – as primary elements for successful online education, they discuss the importance of cognitive and teaching presence for effective teaching, and social presence for effective learning.

The Community of Inquiry model has since been extended to include emotional presence (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012). As claimed by Rienties and Alden Rivers (2014), 'it is important for both students and teachers to generate an inclusive learning climate, where students feel safe and empowered to contribute and participate' (cited in Rienties et al., 2016 p.5).<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that this resonates strongly with a key concept for effective learning for Māori learners: whānaungatanga – the concept of maintaining and fostering relationships that emphasise the importance of togetherness and the co-operative nature of learning (Kerehoma, C, Connor, J., Garrow, L. & Young, C., 2012).

Farooq and Benade (2019)<sup>39</sup> discuss how dialogic pedagogy (Freire, 1993) and critical reflection can be fostered in an online environment:

*The virtual learning environment poses an interesting challenge to the compatibility of these two notions, whereby dialogue is constrained by time lags in communication over discussion forums, blogs and even over email. Successful online courses must, therefore, go beyond technological changes only, and require teachers to commit to pedagogical changes while transitioning from a classroom environment to an online environment (p.7).*

Following Friedman and Friedman (2013), they discuss the importance of Web 2.0 technologies, such as discussion forums, student blogs, class wiki projects, twitter exchanges, online social networking, and video presentations on YouTube, and argue that these technologies are bringing 'dialogue in the online learning environment closer to face to face interactions' (p.9).

Strong levels of learner engagement should both foster, and be a product, of good teaching and learning practices. Tai (2019)<sup>40</sup>, based on research with initial teacher education students, summarises educator strategies that are likely to promote engagement:

- Identify and make explicit the relevance and authenticity of learning content and activities
- Create opportunities for belonging and interactions, especially in digital environments
- Build in feedback – with both peers and tutors
- Be mindful of students' workload, time management and anxiety (p.1).

37 <http://www.jite.org/documents/Vol15/JITEv15ResearchP157-190Sun2138.pdf>

38 <https://jime.open.ac.uk/articles/10.5334/jime.394/>

39 <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1234501.pdf>

40 [https://www.deakin.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/1911566/05-cradle\\_student\\_engagement\\_v2.pdf](https://www.deakin.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1911566/05-cradle_student_engagement_v2.pdf)

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## Assessment / academic integrity

### Assessment

In July 2020, NZQA prepared a document to provide guidance for online assessment, including for offshore programmes. *Online assessment – guidance for providers, NZQA July 2020*<sup>41</sup> is a very useful document with a comprehensive reference list. The strategies to support development of effective online assessment practice are summarised as:

- Adhere to the key principles
- Use a variety of assessment tools
- Redesign group work assessments
- Ensure security of closed-book tests and examinations
- Provide formative assessment opportunities and timely feedback
- Reinforce prevention and detection of academic fraud.

One of the sources for this work is Ako Aotearoa's (2016) publication, *Getting it right: Guidelines for online assessment in New Zealand tertiary contexts (Report prepared by Jane Terrell)*.<sup>42</sup> This publication is accompanied by the Online Assessment Tool Selector (OATS),<sup>43</sup> an interactive online tool for teachers to identify online tools appropriate to their own contexts. OATS and the guidelines are for tertiary teachers using, or planning to use, online assessment. Drawn from the New Zealand context, they are designed to either stand alone, or to be used together.

As highlighted in the discussion about pedagogy above, the COVID-19 environment may have precipitated the 'pivot' to online assessment, but this must be seen as part of a more fundamental shift in thinking about assessment as a whole.

*...in recent times there has been an increasing emphasis on formative assessment, or assessment **for** learning and assessment **as** learning. Formative assessment informs teachers about the effectiveness of both their teaching and their students' learning (Ako Aotearoa, 2016, p.7).*

For example, the Ako Aotearoa (2019) report, *Guidelines for developing and using e-assessments with vocational learners* examines e-assessments for learning activities using a range of pedagogical approaches and digital tools. While some of the approaches could be adapted for a distance or offshore setting, the main point of the research is the use of innovative assessment practices to support the pedagogical changes noted above:

*...the nature of learning will become more learner-centred, individual and social; with personalised and tailor-made learning opportunities availed to assist with the ongoing professional learning needs of individuals and organisations. Thus, there is a need to develop innovative pedagogical concepts to assist all citizens to access flexible and dynamically reacting learning (Ako Aotearoa, 2019, p.10).*

41 <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Monitoring-and-Assessment/Online-assessment-guidance.pdf>

42 <https://ako.ac.nz/assets/Knowledge-centre/RHPF-N65-Getting-it-right-Guidelines-for-online-assessment/GUIDELINES-Getting-it-Right-Guidelines-for-Online-Assessment-in-New-Zealand-Tertiary-Contexts.pdf>

43 <http://oats.net.nz>

In line with this thinking, Crisp, Guàrdia and Hillier (2016)<sup>44</sup> provide a summary of innovations in e-assessment, including:

- a web tool for teachers so that they could make informed choices on how to assess online courses
- peer-assessment of group work
- the concept of a 360° continuous e-assessment approach whereby students are involved in all stages of the assessment process.

Griffin and Mihelic (2019) researched how online learning is used to deliver complete qualifications in the Australian VET sector. The education professionals they interviewed were asked to identify the factors they felt contributed to good practice in online learning. The summary of those factors relating to assessment also reflects the need for flexibility and innovation:

- Varied forms of assessment
- Context-based assessment, e.g., students becoming 'employees' of virtual companies and preparing assessments based on their 'workplace'
- Flexibility in how evidence is submitted
- Integration of assessment so that competencies are assessed more than once
- For some subject areas, online simulations can be useful
- Flexibility to offer alternative arrangements to cater to student needs (p.59).

It is not clear whether work placements or some form of practical experience will be a component of any of the programmes to be delivered offshore. The Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning provides a comprehensive guide for thinking about work-integrated assessment, which may be useful if this will occur (Boud, Ajjawi & Tai, 2020).

### **Academic integrity / assessment security**

During a consultation on offshore delivery carried out by NZQA in 2017,<sup>45</sup> respondents were asked what they considered to be the distinctive value or benefit for an offshore student of undertaking a New Zealand qualification. The most mentioned benefits were:

- the high-quality reputation, credibility, and international recognition of New Zealand qualifications, and
- NZQA quality assurance (NZQA, 2017, p.1).

Academic integrity and the security of assessments are fundamental to maintaining the credibility of New Zealand qualifications regardless of how they are delivered, but online, offshore delivery brings a particular set of challenges:

*The quality of online learning in VET may be threatened if there is increased potential for plagiarism and/or issues with the authenticity of assessment. The distance between the student and the trainer/assessor in online learning may mean that these are larger issues for online courses compared with face-to-face courses (Griffin & Mihelic, 2019, p.52).*

44 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s41239-016-0020-3>

45 <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Offshore-delivery/offshore-delivery-summary-of-feedback-appendix-one.pdf>

The Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE) investigates improvements in higher education assessment in the context of a rapidly expanding digital environment, summarising its extensive research activities in a series of briefings.<sup>46</sup> The briefing on academic integrity, assessment security and digital assessment provides a summary of the latest research in these areas. While acknowledging the importance of assessment security, the authors argue that in an online context it is as important to foster academic integrity by building a culture of integrity and trust.<sup>47</sup>

### **Online Education Services (OES), Australia**

OES was established 'to challenge and advance the online education industry, providing a new student-centric approach to adult education' (APEC, 2019). The organisation's website blog has a series of useful articles, for example:

- Three ways video is changing online learning
- Video is critical to engage online students
- Marrying data and delivery to provide student support
- Advancing academic integrity through innovation.<sup>48</sup>

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## **Effective use of technology to support online learning**

It is to be envisaged that any expansion of online delivery to offshore students would (in the first instance) be confined to TEOs who already have a good track record of effective and efficient online learning, with appropriate technology, and with staff who have expertise in online student support, teaching and learning, and assessment.

### **Technology for online delivery**

In a New Zealand-based research project, Gunn, McDonald, Donald, Milne & Blumenstein (2017) found that the institutions that they engaged with as part of the project mainly used off-the-shelf e-learning / LMS products complemented with 'specialised tools with specific functions such as e-Portfolios (e.g., Mahara), conferencing software (e.g., Zoom or Bb Collaborate), discussion (e.g., Piazza), and assessment tools (e.g., Peerwise)' p.32. Bespoke tools had been developed by some institutions or by collaborations of providers. For example, The Open Polytechnic had a tool custom built to meet the needs of a specific target group of distance learners.

It is beyond the scope of this review to describe or compare the latest technological innovations.<sup>49</sup> We can, however, suggest some principles as TEOs look to invest in new or improved technology:

- The outcome of the investment should be an 'engaging and positive online student experience' (Stone, 2016, p.7), not technology for its own sake

46 <https://www.deakin.edu.au/about-deakin/teaching-and-learning/cradle/resources-and-publications>

47 [https://www.deakin.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/2091567/07-cradle\\_academic-integrity-online\\_v2s.pdf](https://www.deakin.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2091567/07-cradle_academic-integrity-online_v2s.pdf)

48 <https://www.oes.edu.au/news-insights/>

49 The Institute for Adult Learning in Singapore provides a list of curated e-learning platforms and resources that may be useful: <https://www.ial.edu.sg/find-resources/learning-resources-and-tools/online-resources.html>

- Consider the benefits of cross-institutional collaboration – ‘the advantage of such collaboration is in building a community of users and developers in order to support ongoing development as time and resource permits’ (Gunn et al., 2017, p.32)
- Carefully consider the potential of technology to provide robust learning analytics, or to be integrated with analytic systems and tools, and other institutional systems (Gunn et al., 2017).

## Learning analytics

Institutions collect a mass of student data in the normal course of events. Online learning, however, by its very nature, provides a wealth of electronic touch points and additional data collection opportunities. This data may enable institutions to develop predictive models, to personalise interventions, and to inform course design (Stone, 2016). Cohen (2018) defines learning analytics as:

*The collection, analysis, and reporting of learner data, for the principle [sic] means of enhancing learning. It is argued that learning analytics – when available in a consistent and digestible format – not only provides educators with a clear view of the learners “footprint” but also allows for the means of navigating the broad spectrum of possible learning interventions.*

*Building an evidence base for teaching and learning design using learning analytics* (Gunn et al., 2017) is an Ako Aotearoa-funded two-year research project that aimed to promote positive changes to tertiary teaching and learning design practice in the understanding and use of learner analytics. While lengthy, it provides a thorough research-based background to learner analytics and six useful case studies, examining different aspects of the use of learner analytics by New Zealand institutions.<sup>50</sup>

Rienties et al., (2016)<sup>51</sup> provide a useful summary of the learning analytics literature to date. In support of the basis of the work by Gunn et al., (2017), discussed above, they argue that:

*One of the largest challenges for learning analytics research and practice still lies ahead of us, and that one substantial and immediate challenge is how to put the power of learning analytics into the hands of teachers and administrators (p.1).*

To help address this challenge, they have developed an evidence-based framework for learning analytics (Analytics4Action Evaluation Framework) whereby stakeholders can manage, evaluate, and make decisions about which types of interventions work well and under which conditions. The elements of this framework are:

- Key metric and drill downs
- Menu of response actions (based on the Community of Inquiry model discussed above)
- Menu of protocols to implement the chosen intervention strategy
- Outcome analysis and evaluation
- An institutional evidence hub for sharing evidence and case studies
- Deep dive analysis and strategic insight for feedback and recalibration.

50 <https://ako.ac.nz/assets/Knowledge-centre/NPF-15-008-Building-an-Evidence-Base-for-Teaching-and-Learning-Design-Using-Learning-Analytics-Data/RESEARCH-REPORT-Building-an-evidence-base-for-teaching-and-learning-design-using-learning-analytics.pdf>

51 <https://jime.open.ac.uk/articles/10.5334/jime.394/>

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## Scalability

In a very interesting book chapter, Seelig and Nichols (2017)<sup>52</sup> discuss The Open Polytechnic's (OP) approach to distance learning. OP follows a resource-based model of distance learning, which is based on:

- team-developed instructional materials, written as a 'guided didactic conversation'
- self-paced learning within a semester structure, assuming an independent learner
- technology used to improve communications and services for students
- the LMS being used to provide course materials and structured forums for engagement with students, with a degree of centralised standardisation of course presentation (Seelig and Nichols, 2017).

This model is compared with a lecture-based model, where the teacher remains predominant, with online learning adapted to make 'one' teacher more accessible to more learners e.g., the use of MOOCs.

Seelig and Nichols (2017) argue OP's resource-based model provides a 'distinctive advantage in an environment seeking scalability, accessibility and flexibility in higher education' (p.115) and that OP would be well-placed to 'act as the leader for e-learning in the New Zealand tertiary sector and play a central role in the provision of high-quality courseware in TVET programmes' (p.109).

This discussion is particularly interesting in the context of current developments, where OP is but one subsidiary of Te Pūkenga, now New Zealand's largest tertiary education provider.<sup>53</sup>

52 [http://oasis.col.org/bitstream/handle/11599/2718/2017\\_Latchem\\_Using-ICTs-and-Blended-Learning.pdf?sequence=1#page=118](http://oasis.col.org/bitstream/handle/11599/2718/2017_Latchem_Using-ICTs-and-Blended-Learning.pdf?sequence=1#page=118)

53 Seven of Te Pūkenga's other subsidiaries also offer online delivery, via eCampus NZ <https://www.ecampusnz.com/who-we-are/>

## Professional development

*One factor likely to have a substantial influence on the quality and effectiveness of online learning is the capability of teachers and trainers to develop high-quality and fit-for-purpose content, as well as having the skills to deliver such a course (Griffin & Mihelic, 2019, p.54).*

APEC (2019) confirms that online teaching requires specific skills sets and outlines some of the barriers that may constrain the development of effective online teaching:

- Underlying beliefs about teaching that exclude acceptance of the online format
- Difficulties changing teachers' deep rooted perceptions about the art of teaching
- The difficulty for teachers in keeping up with the pace of technological developments
- Underestimation of the time and energy involved in providing academic interaction with online students
- Underestimation of the time and energy taken to bring about sustainable change (p.12).

Revisiting the concept of 'teacher presence' (Garrison et al., 2009) suggests three areas where professional development may need to occur:

- instructional design
- discourse facilitation
- direct instruction.

It is, however, interesting to consider both these barriers and areas for development in light of the discussion above regarding the Open Polytechnic's resource-based model. Rather than thinking simply about professional development to enhance 'teacher presence', we can perhaps think about the broader implications depending on the model of delivery, outlined in the continuum below.

	Resource-based model	Hybrid model	Teacher-based model
Delivery	Asynchronous	Synchronous & asynchronous	Synchronous
Instruction	Instruction via resources	Instruction via facilitator	Instruction via teacher
Content	Standardised	Some personalisation	Personalised
Direction	Learner directed	Learner / teacher directed	Teacher directed

With a resource-based model, as used by the Open Polytechnic, the responsibility for instructional design, the delivery technology, facilitation, student support and so forth, will sit with different teams, which will each have their specialised professional development requirements. The teacher-based model, on the other hand, puts more onus on the teacher or lecturer to develop their skills across a wider range of activities 'to prepare and maintain their own online presence' as well as they are able (Seelig & Nichols, 2017, p.107). One would imagine that this is where many teachers found themselves when the push to online delivery resulting from COVID-19 occurred, while the hybrid model is likely to be used by those institutions that have been working in the online delivery space for some time.

We place no judgement on these models; the important thing is for any institution when they are thinking about professional development for online delivery is to clearly understand their model, what they expect from the people involved, and how they plan to best support those expectations.

Professional development is also particularly important when new concepts are introduced.

The growth of learning analytics provides a good example of this:

*Professional development and incentives for teachers are required to promote both the benefits and the methods of data informed teaching, learning design and learning support (Gunn et al., 2017, p.8).*

Gunn et al., (2017) developed a simple Learning Analytics – Learning Design (LA-LD) Framework to demonstrate data-informed teaching and learning design opportunities. This can be used to prompt teachers to focus on very specific questions at different points during the regular teaching cycle. It can also be used as an entry point to make sense of more complex learning analytics conceptual frameworks as teachers gain confidence (p.12).

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## Quality assurance

The importance of robust quality assurance of online delivery, and in offshore online delivery in particular, is a theme that runs through this review. This occurs at three levels: the overarching quality assurance regimes of bodies like NZQA and its Australian equivalent; the quality management standards and systems of individual institutions; and the assessment and moderation expectations of each programme.

As well as its usual quality assurance role, NZQA works to ensure that the NZQF is recognised globally, encouraging the transfer of learning. In particular, that qualifications and learning gained in New Zealand are recognised both nationally and internationally as relevant, useful, and of high quality.

In the 2019 report, *Strengthening Skills (The Joyce Report)*, the author proposes an educative approach for the quality assurance body, recommending that ASQA provide more guidance to those it is regulating. A Vocational Education and Training (VET) Ombudsman is also proposed.<sup>54</sup>

At the institutional level, APEC's *Quality Assurance of Online Learning Toolkit (2019)* provides excellent guidance. Some examples of focus points:

- Leadership and management:
  - Do key documents, such as institutional quality assurance policies, provide for online or blended delivery? (p.10).
- Review and improvement:
  - Are institutional leaders, managers and staff aware of quality assurance processes for online and blended learning? (p.14).

54 [https://pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/strengthening-skills-independent-review-australia-vets\\_1.pdf](https://pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/strengthening-skills-independent-review-australia-vets_1.pdf)

# 8 Whakarāpopototanga

## Summary

*The new normal will entail a redefinition of international education and the emergence of innovative models that can increase access and equity, lower costs, and enhance the quality of education for an interconnected and networked world (Kanwar & Carr, 2020, p.332)*

The 'new normal' is still somewhat hazy and distant but Kanwar and Carr (2020) point to some of the likely impacts of the massive disruption arising from COVID-19 in 2020 has had, and will have, on international education, for example:

- threats to institutions overly reliant on international students
- changing hierarchies as some countries become more attractive destinations
- countries who were traditionally 'senders' of students moving to becoming 'hosts'
- greater flexibility in many aspects of education, e.g., credit transferability, short courses / micro-credentials
- greater use of online, distance and/or hybrid models.

It is important to note that many of these factors have been emerging for some time; their development has been accelerated and others have been brought abruptly to the fore.

Against this backdrop of urgent short-term considerations and the opportunity for deeper long-term 'future proofing' (Naidu & Roberts, 2018), we now pose a series of considerations that may need to be taken into account for the development and prioritisation of good practice guidelines and tools for offshore online delivery.

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### Strategic and policy settings

The International Education Strategy and impact of 'disruptors' in 2020 signal it may be time to re-imagine international education. This provides an opportunity for some brave future proofing and innovative ideas,<sup>55</sup> and online delivery to students offshore could play a significant role in New Zealand's potential offerings.

If this is to be the case, it could also be pertinent to review New Zealand's commitment to the OECD guidelines (see p.14), which call for:

- comprehensive quality assurance and accreditation models specifically designed for delivery offshore
- programmes that take account of the cultural and linguistic needs of the students' home country
- the involvement of student bodies in the design and quality assurance of offshore education.

<sup>55</sup> As an example, the Canadian-based Commonwealth of Learning has developed a Transnational Qualifications Framework, which facilitates international credit transfer (Kanwar & Carr, 2020).

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## Government agencies

If online delivery offshore is set to expand, then government agencies and regulatory bodies will wish to 'front-foot' the changes required to support quality of delivery. The good practice tools that NZQA are proposing to develop are a great start, and resonate with the educative role for the quality regulatory body suggested in the *Joyce Report (2019)*.

Another theme of the material reviewed for this report is the value of cross-body or pan-institution collaboration. The guidelines and literature reviewed certainly suggest that there are leaders or subject matter experts in many of the areas considered, so it is not hard to imagine communities of practice developing around key areas. These could be facilitated by NZQA, or another body like Ako Aotearoa, and draw on the expertise residing in the sector.<sup>56</sup> These would enable good practice guidelines to become 'living documents', regularly updated as new information emerges.

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## Tertiary Education Organisations (TEO)

The idea of communities of practice would also work well for TEOs, who provide the systems and infrastructure for offshore online delivery, and support the professional development of staff. Given the transformational nature of some the changes that will be necessary to move the sector, it seems sensible to avoid duplication of effort and to share new ideas, approaches and technologies. As one of the main players in the area, Te Pūkenga is already its own 'cluster' and it is to be hoped that the constituent subsidiaries are already well on the way to sharing good practice in this and other areas.

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## Educators

As confirmed by the literature, the educators are key to the quality of offshore online delivery. They need to be familiar with the technology, content and pedagogy along with needing to develop relationships with learners and provide learning, pastoral and technical support for them. What the literature has revealed, though, is a more nuanced idea of the different aspects of the 'educator' and shown that the expertise and skill may reside across the organisation, and not necessarily be concentrated in one student-facing person.

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## Learners

Ending as we began the literature review section, the learners must be at the heart of any good practice guidelines or tools that are developed. A good learning experience requires: the learner to have sense of self-efficacy and agency over their learning, an acknowledgment of the importance of interaction and connection for the learner, and a sound ecosystem of learner supports.

<sup>56</sup> The Kāhui Ako model being used in schools and by some tertiary education providers could be considered here. <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/communities-of-learning-kahui-ako>

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