

# Supporting priority group students in the New Zealand Certificate in Animal Care with a Te Tīpare lens.

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The New Zealand Certificate in Animal Care (NZCAC) is a level three certificate with many students from priority groups. In most intakes we have 75% or more under 25s, up to 25% Māori and up to 12% Pacific. Most of our students are stepping back into to study, often using the certificate to qualify to enter higher programmes at Unitec and elsewhere. In some cases students are seeking an entry level qualification to the animal industries. Our students often have issues that affected success at school or previous study (Berryman & Ely, 2017; Te Wiata, 2016), stepping back into study is affected by the challenges these issues raise for students. We observe mental health (MH) issues that impinge on student success. In some cases MH issues present as inability to complete assessments in particular written assessments, non-attendance at classes as well as missing tests and other course events. To support priority groups in this cohort we endeavour to identify student needs and provide necessary pastoral support (Greenwood & Te Aika, 2008; Te Wiata, 2016, Sciascia, 2017), as well as targeted learning and MH support. Whanaungatanga is the strongest feature of our support for ākonga as recognised by our students, support team colleagues and our self-evaluation.

Keywords: Te Tīpare, priority groups, whanaungatanga, Māori, Pacific, under 25

Figure 1.  
Te Tīpare framework



Note: from Te Tīpare v2 by Unitec 2021. <https://moodle.unitec.ac.nz>

## Using a Te Tīpare lens to evaluate our progress and possible interventions

Using Te Tīpare (see figure 1) as a lens is helpful to understand how we promote the success of priority groups (Unitec, 2019; Unitec 2021). We rely on support teams at Unitec in particular our Learning Advisors (LAs) with active engagement of Maia and Pacific Learning Advisors as well as our dedicated Environmental and Animal Sciences (EAS) learning advisors and in particular our Library Liaison. We also rely heavily on Learner Outreach, Access4Success and Student Counselling teams who are also critical to help support our ākonga. To identify what is working, as well as areas for improvement and possible interventions we spoke to our support teams to inform this process.

We also used an approach to mapping the Te Tīpare pou across our programme delivery that was suggested by Victor Grbic our former Kaihautū (personal communication, December 2020). We aggregated self-scored performance against the Te Tīpare v1 framework (Unitec, 2019) which EAS uses for measurement of support for Māori students in the department. For the work presented here we also requested our support team colleagues to reflect on our performance using the Te Tīpare v2 (Unitec, 2021). The summary of self-rating vs ratings by Unitec support teams are shown in figure 2. Overall our colleagues rated us much higher than our self ratings.

Figure 2.  
Te tīpare analysis of the NZCAC programme

|                  | Support team ratings | Combined self ratings | Merge                 |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Mātauranga Māori | mauri tū             | mauri oho-tū          | approaching mauri tū  |
| Pūkenga          | mauri ora            | low mauri tū          | approaching mauri ora |
| Manaaki          | mauri ora            | mauri tū              | approaching mauri ora |
| Aro              | mauri tū             | mauri oho +           | approaching mauri tū  |
| Ako              | mauri tū             | mauri oho +           | approaching mauri tū  |
| Whanaungatanga   | mauri ora            | mauri tū              | mauri ora             |

Note: self ratings are drawn from 2020 course box analysis, support team ratings were drawn from the interviews. The merge values are approximate averages of both values



Pastoral care is a keystone to ākonga success, without which we could not meet priority targets. Our use of whanaungatanga drives our work with students to provide a community to support their studies, through teachers, programme coordinators and support teams. Students acknowledge whanaungatanga as highly effective in student survey responses. Support team interviews suggested a much higher level of whanaungatanga than our self-rating and a useful analogy was provided by one participant who suggested that the te tīpare pou do not stand in isolation but rather function as a weave, and that our tremendous efforts with whanaungatanga underpin the other pou heavily. Ideas for increasing the impact of our whanaungatanga include more extensive opportunities for Pacific and Maia teams to engage with ākonga early in their journey to build stronger relationships between priority students and support teams.



While the teaching team upskills to support priority groups, we cannot do everything necessary to ensure their success solely within the teaching team. Engagement with Unitec support teams exemplifies manaaki and pūkenga to leverage human resources, and we supplement the pūkenga of our subject teachers with expert teams that Unitec provides. We posit that these uses of our expert teams adds dimension to our pūkenga by bringing in the extra support necessary for the success of our ākonga, it takes a village to teach our ākonga and fortunately we do not have to work alone. Sufficient provision of support for ākonga is critical for māori success (Berryman & Ely, 2017; Greenwood & Te Aika, 2008; Te Aiatā, 2016) and benefits all learners.



Published studies show that Māori ākonga respond best to teaching styles leveraging ako where the ākonga are engaged using mātauranga in their teaching and recognising their existing knowledge, even engaging in informed discussions with ākonga which shows respect for their ideas (Greenwood & Te Aika, 2008; Te Aiatā, 2016). Aro relates to the ako we develop in our classes, they are parts of the te tīpare weave that closely overlap and can be supported together. One idea that arose from conversations with our LA team was to wrap the LAs closer to students' assessment cycles, as it stands some of our LA team join us for teaching and do provide targeted support for assessments. Providing the right support for ākonga when it is most necessary in class supports their learning and assessment work and is acknowledged broadly in the literature as necessary (Greenwood & Te Aika, 2008; Te Wiata, 2016). One aspect that has emerged from previous interventions is non-Māori ākonga being critical of obviously targeted interventions (Berryman & Ely, 2017) however the same interventions are of equal benefit to all students and will not appear as targeted measures if well embedded in the learning programme. Another aspect that LAs suggested was very relevant to ākonga was understanding their motivations for studying with us, this will also help across our pou



We have struggled for some time to improve the mātauranga Māori aspects of the NZCAC programme. We use some te reo Māori and can use more, a great analogy was to use raindrops of te reo Māori for as many components of our programme as possible. While there has been some recent debate on mātauranga Māori in science, there has been evidence that science can embrace mātauranga (Broughton et al, 2015; Crawford, 2009). By acknowledging the bicultural reality of our society and recognising the mātauranga of our ākonga with te reo and culturally appropriate examples (Berryman & Ely, 2017; Te Wiata 2016) we hope to lift our mātauranga on all courses in the NZCAC. The weave pattern featured in these panels (lucidwaters, 2014) is one example of our current mātauranga.

## Conclusions

Although in 2020 we surpassed the Unitec 2022 targets for Māori and under 25 success and we are very close with our Pacific learners, there is still a need to increase our work with priority groups. By ongoing use of the Te Tīpare framework with our whanaungatanga as our strong central pou, we aim to constantly lift our game and ensure the continued success of our learners in the NZCAC. The conversations behind this poster have provided many more ideas for implementing Te Tīpare driven improvements to the programme than we could possibly display. It may be worth considering a full researched approach to analysing the success of our interventions in the future. Thank you to all the support teams that have contributed to this korero and talanoa.

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