



**The Mind Lab | Tech Futures Lab | Earth Futures Lab**

# **Self Review Report**

Review of academyEX practices against the outcomes and processes of the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice (2021).

October 2023

## TEO Information

TEO Name	academyEX Education Limited Partnership				MoE number	9185	
Code contact	Name	Hayley Sparks			Job title	Academic Director	
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Current enrolments (as at 31st Oct 2022)	Domestic learners	Total	859	18 y/o or older	859		
				Under 18 y/o	0		
	International learners	Total	44	18 y/o or older	44		
				Under 18 y/o	0		
Report Author	Hayley Sparks (Academic Director)						

## Self-Review Outcomes

Continuous self-review continues to be embedded in academyEX's quality assurance practices on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Further, learners are at the centre of our educational approach and organisation mission - 'Creating Impactful Futures'. This self review report reflects on the actions identified in 2022 and provides an overview of how our organisational structures support a whole-of-provider approach to a learner wellbeing and safety system, which is strategic, transparent and responds to the diverse needs of all our learners. Actions for 2023-2024 are also noted as an indication of where our focus needs to be moving forward.

Culturally responsive, equitable and effective support for the wellbeing and safety of domestic and international learners engaging with us is our priority. Wellbeing can be defined holistically as pertaining to physical, spiritual, mental and emotional, and social dimensions of individual and community health. We are committed to continuing to work towards processes and practices building on progress toward being a good partner of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the continued integration of Te Tiriti principles into our practices, including what this means for onshore and offshore domestic and international learners.

*Our Learner Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Goals for 2023-2024 include*

- Provide an inclusive and safe learning environment (both in person, and online reflecting academyEX delivery modes) that enables diverse (i.e. all) learners to thrive and meet their aspirations and the aspirations of their communities.
- Support learners and alumni, both in New Zealand and globally, in responsive, inclusive, culturally appropriate ways to create a strong sense of connection and community.
- Proactively engage with learners and stakeholders to ensure continuous improvement of academyEX learner wellbeing and safety practices.

### Part 3 (Education Code of Practice): Organisational structures to support a whole-of-provider approach to learner wellbeing and safety

Outcome 1: A Learner Wellbeing and Safety System
Self-Review Rating: Implemented
<p><i>Summary of Performance (including how we know):</i></p> <p>At the centre of academyEX's whole-organisation (all teams, academic and otherwise) Teaching and Learning Strategy, Te Ara Kōtihi are learners. Positive relationships are at the centre of our philosophy and values for teaching and learning. As a collective, the following organisational kaupapa Māori values drive our practice, and underpin everything we do, and importantly guide all activities described in this document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manaaki - We nurture and care for staff and learners in our various activities and learning spaces through our conversations, knowledge sharing, and supporting the wellbeing of all. We embrace difference and respect everyone's values and include everyone, no matter their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religious beliefs, disability, political opinion or employment status, in all the places and spaces we interact in.</li> <li>- Rangatiratanga - We respect diverse talents and ways of learning; we will support all students to express their learning in ways that are diverse and sustaining to their culture. We acknowledge our cultural heritage and explicitly support Māori and Pacific staff and learners to achieve at the highest levels.</li> <li>- Ako - We believe effective, reciprocal teaching interactions and strong positive relationships are fostered through knowledge exchange. We foster collaborative and effective teaching and learning environments.</li> <li>- Pono - We are all accountable and responsible for our actions – there is transparency, truth, integrity and honesty in everything that we do. We are transparent about the way we make decisions, carefully consider those who might be affected by these decisions, and the impact of these decisions on others.</li> </ul> <p>Our wellbeing and safety systems are responsive, and through a range of mechanisms (including, quarterly reviews of NZQA's KEQs, learner feedback, student ethics processes and close cross team collaboration) we are able to identify any emerging concerns about learners' wellbeing and safety and take steps to connect them to culturally appropriate support services. <i>See Outcome 3 and 4 for further discussion.</i></p> <p>Emergency management plans are in place and the Executive Leadership Team coordinates and responses and plans in an emergency situation to communicate with the wider organisation and learners when required.</p> <p>Reflecting on actions set in 2022, staff professional development was a key theme identified in the culture, values and engagement survey conducted in July 2023 and ongoing planning is taking place for a coherent professional development programme to be implemented in 2024. Reviewing strategies, policies and practices is critical to a coherent whole of provider approach and is an ongoing process.</p>
<p><i>Opportunities for Improvement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Te Ara Kōtihi is a central strategy for academyEX and has been in operation for the past 5 years. As the organisation has evolved, there is a need for a full and</li> </ul>

<p>complete review of the strategy, to integrate learner wellbeing and safety goals, as well as goals from our Disability Action Plan in a more coherent way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to work proactively with learners and stakeholders to further improve our strategic goals and plans.</li> <li>- Continued development of Staff Professional Development Session Schedules, including a focus on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Learner Wellbeing and Safety, and Cybersecurity and Data Privacy.</li> </ul>	
<i>Actions (with Owner)</i>	<i>Measure of Success (with Monitoring Plan)</i>
<p>Staff Professional Development (Training and Resources) Plan and prioritisation of sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Te Tiriti o Waitangi</li> <li>- Learner Wellbeing and Safety</li> <li>- Cybersecurity and Data Privacy</li> </ul> <p><i>Owners: Academic Director, Head of People and Culture</i></p>	<p>Staff engage with and reflect on professional development sessions and resources, leading to better Learner support organisation wide.</p> <p>Data from the next Culture, Values and Engagement survey and team reflections through KEQ evaluation and review.</p>
<p>Continued development and review of organisational strategies related to teaching, learning and learner wellbeing and safety.</p> <p><i>Owner: Te Ara Kōtihi Working Group</i></p>	<p>Integrated and improved strategic documentation and feedback from key stakeholders.</p> <p>Review of Te Ara Kōtihi by June 2024 (aligning to the Matariki cycle on which our Te Ara Kōtihi implementation plans run).</p>

## **Outcome 2: Learner Voice**

Self-Review Rating: Implemented

*Summary of Performance (including how we know):*

academyEX's (*Te Ara Kōtihi*) core values of Manaaki, Pono, Ako and Rangatiratanga are the foundation upon which strong relationships are built and maintained with diverse learner groups. With the learners at the centre, our practices are structured to uphold the mana and autonomy of learners. Across all of the programmes that we deliver, our learners are leaders, practitioners and professionals, bringing with them a wealth of education and professional experiences that make them, in many occasions, experts in their fields.

Formal and informal processes continue to be implemented to ensure that we actively hear and engage with the diverse range of learner voices and their communities. These processes include:

- Regular student feedback surveys
- Student Advisory Group, where learners currently engaged in our programmes meet to discuss their experiences as well as provide feedback on items of discussion from academyEX (e.g. new programme proposals, platform development).
- Industry and Academic Advisory Group, which includes those working in

relevant industry, as well as in academia. They are members of our learners communities and provide insight into the needs of industry and the support we can provide learners.

With strong relationships developed with learners, we also receive a lot of unsolicited feedback, which is collated and integrated into continuous self review and improvement processes through quarterly reporting and actions.

Student Complaint processes are outlined in the *Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures*, and learners are able to access this policy through their Student Handbooks. In here, reference is made to NZQA's complaints procedure for learners to follow if they are not satisfied with academyEX's response. Records of formal complaints are tabled with Academic Governance Group (no formal complaints have been received thus far in 2023).

Reflecting on opportunities for improvement identified in 2022, the alumni community has evolved, and well-attended events have been held. Ongoing initiatives such as Converge are also a key way in which learner voice (including supporting alumni) is gathered and students are supported in their learning. The Student Advisory Group is now facilitated by the Academic Administrator and Programme Manager and provides space for students to share feedback and provide insights to support growth and development.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- Continue building the alumni community and establish new relationships
- Review the way in which Student Advisory Groups (and engagement with wider groups of learners) inform the continuous review and improvement of how we support learner wellbeing and safety (broaden the scope of Student and Industry/Academic Advisory Group to explicitly integrate the disabled community (Disability Action Plan).

<i>Actions (with Owner)</i>	<i>Measure of Success (with Monitoring Plan)</i>
<p>Continued consultation with Alumni to develop an Alumni community that is of value to them following the Community Manager leaving.</p> <p><i>Owner: General Manager, in collaboration with Marketing and Programme Teams</i></p>	<p>Increased attendance at Alumni events and engagement with communication</p>
<p>Inclusion of disabled communities in Student and Industry/Academic Advisory Groups.</p> <p><i>Owners: Academic Director with Academic Administrator and Programme Manager.</i></p>	<p>Spaces provided for disabled communities to share feedback and provide advice and support, and identify opportunities for academyEX to provide more inclusive teaching and learning spaces.</p>

## Part 4 (Education Code of Practice): Wellbeing and safety practices for all tertiary providers

### Outcome 3: Safe, inclusive, supportive, and accessible physical and digital learning environments

Self-Review Rating: Implemented

Summary of Performance (including how we know):

Practices that foster learning environments that are safe and designed to support positive learning experiences for diverse learner groups are integrated into the design of our programmes, delivery in physical and digital learning environments, and approaches to learner support from an academic and pastoral care perspective.

Student feedback indicates the way in which learning environments and experiences are safe, inclusive and culturally responsive. For example: *"They're [staff] amazing and do an amazing job of reassuring students that support is readily available for them if they need it."*

This feedback highlights a number of important mechanisms and spaces which are created for learners to engage in a culturally responsive way, including Manaakifono, Mahi Tahi, Converge<sup>1</sup>, Learning Agreements<sup>2</sup> for Master's projects, and Wānanga where learners can come together for support from both staff and fellow learners. All learners are welcomed to their programme through a formal whakatau if they are coming to learn with us at academyEX HQ in Grafton, or an online Mihi for those cohorts learning online.

Manaakifono sessions have provided (and continue to) opportunities for Māori and Pacific learners to give feedback to Māori and Pacific staff on their own learning experience. This feedback is incorporated into academyEX review and improvement processes (both generally but also specifically, when immediate support is needed for individuals or groups of learners).

One of the key ways in which safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments are created and maintained is through the connection between staff and learners, and the relationships that are developed building a sense of trust and community. This sense of trust and community is initiated through a focus on whakawhanaungatanga at the beginning of each intake. Connecting with like minded individuals (both as peers in the learning experience, but also with facilitators and industry subject-matter experts) is one of the key benefits learners highlight when reflecting on their learning journeys. Feedback from learners demonstrates these points:

- *"Facilitation and content has been relevant and aligns to my current learning. I enjoy the opportunities to talanoa with other students and to listen to their experiences in their settings. I know that the setting I work in (māori medium) contributes to the whole picture of education and I'm grateful that my peers are always ready to listen and are genuinely interested in my contributions."*
- *"Loved the opportunity to grow as a professional, have collegial discussions and work with others in other parts of the country on assignments."*

<sup>1</sup> Regular research community sessions

<sup>2</sup> Learning Agreements support learners to define the outcome of their masters project

- *"Found the diversity and range of lecturers very refreshing. So different from my experience of a traditional university. Same with the staff at Tech Futures. The student body too is as above and because we're all so different I get challenged on my points of view and it forces me to look at all the different angles of an idea. Absolutely love the learning."*

There are a number of mechanisms through which these relationships are developed, and spaces are provided for learners to engage in culturally responsive ways, and with Māori and Pacific staff. Feedback from both staff and learners indicates that these spaces provide opportunities where learners can be open, transparent, their authentic selves and often speak te reo Māori or other languages.

Reflecting on opportunities for improvement identified in 2022, we have continued to review how learning environments are safe for all learners, and identify opportunities for improvement. We have also navigated different scenarios where students have indicated that cultural safety could be improved, both in the delivery of programmes and support provided. This feedback prompted specific changes in the way the programme was delivered for the intake those students were part of (through content and pedagogy as well as ensuring additional support is provided where needed. Student Feedback on our Learning Management System has also informed updates to the platform throughout the year.

#### Opportunities for Improvement:

- Review the ways in which learners who identify as gender diverse see themselves authentically represented in our physical learning environments.
- Continue our te reo and tikanga Māori journey as an organisation, building staff and learner capability to be good partners of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Continue to develop our ability to support learners who indicate a disability (either through the enrolment process or in conversations with staff)
- Continue to develop and implement initiatives to support Māori and Pacific students, for example, through organisational wānanga to provide space and support for learning and assessment.
- Strong induction of new staff joining academyEX is roles such as Kaihautaū Māori and Pou Whirinake, and ensure that students are well supported while these roles are being recruited.

<i>Actions (with Owner)</i>	<i>Measure of Success (with Monitoring Plan)</i>
Initiate a review of the inclusivity of our digital and physical learning environments and practices for people who identify as gender diverse, neurodiverse or have other impairments.	Improvement in feedback from learners
Development and implementation of initiatives to support Māori and Pacific learners further  <i>Owner: Programme Teams, Pou Tautua and Kaihautaū Māori and Pou Whirinaki roles once recruited</i>	Implementation of new initiatives (e.g. cross programme wānanga), strong attendance and positive student feedback.  <i>Monitoring: KEQ Evaluation and Review</i>



#### Outcome 4: Learners are safe and well

Self-Review Rating: Implemented

Summary of Performance (including how we know):

academyEX partners with Whakarongorau Aotearoa // New Zealand Telehealth Services to connect learners with professional services when they advise of personal challenges that are impacting on their lives and engagement in their learning. Information about this service is provided in all student handbooks, through the Learning Management System, and through communications from staff in a timely way once any known risks to learners health, wellbeing and safety are identified.

Feedback from learners indicates that their learning experiences support them to connect to their language, culture, and identity

- *"I'm not usually one to post on here but I'm a bit excited to have officially completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Leading Change for Good at academyEX 🎉 a big deal considering this is the first qualification that I've managed to finish! I am so grateful to all the team and my cohort for all their support during this entire journey. One that I'm sure, won't end here. This was not just for me but for my village, my aiga. Fa'afetai tele lava"*
- *"My advisor was really helpful and provided open and honest feedback. Wonderful to be able to kōrero Māori during some of our communications both asynchronous and synchronous."*

Tracking of learner engagement and progress by Programme Teams and Coordinators allows academyEX to identify any learners who might be at risk from a personal and academic perspective, and be able to support them, or connect with those that can offer support. We have different ways by which we can support learners who have unforeseen circumstances that are impacting on their personal and professional lives and therefore their ability to complete or continue their study.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- Many of our learners experience significant life events and professional challenges whilst studying and Masters Advisors are often entrusted with very confidential information and offer support to learners. There are boundaries however that need to be maintained as Advisors are not qualified mental health practitioners. Professional Development is scheduled, and a pilot project to provide synchronous and asynchronous support for learners has been tabled with the Leadership team with possible implementation in 2024. This helps to keep our learners safe and well, but also staff.
- Review of information provided to students in the space of health and wellbeing.

*Actions (with Owner)*

*Measure of Success (with Monitoring Plan)*

Pastoral Care support and professional development for staff to provide more effective support for learners.

Pastoral Care Professional Development Workshop (attendance by staff and feedback).

*Owner: Academic Director, Director of Studies.*

Pilot programme implementation for synchronous and asynchronous support.

**Part 6: Additional wellbeing and safety practices for tertiary providers (signatories) enrolling international learners**

<b>Outcome 8: Responding to the distinct wellbeing and safety needs of international tertiary learners</b>
<b>Outcome 9: Prospective international tertiary learners are well informed</b>
<b>Outcome 10: Offer, enrolment, contracts, insurance and visa</b>
<b>Outcome 11: International learners receive appropriate orientations, information and advice</b>
Self-Review Rating: Developing Implementation/Implemented
<p>In 2023, academyEX has enrolled 3 international students onshore in Masters degrees (2 x Master of Technological Futures and 1 x Master of Change and Organisational Resilience, and 41 international students have studied offshore (online distance delivery of micro-credentials). Having small numbers of international students throughout the year has enabled us to work very closely with these students, revise and develop our processes where opportunities for improvement have been identified.</p> <p><i>Summary of Performance (including how we know):</i>  All required information for <i>Marketing and Promotion</i> to enable international learners to make an informed decision about studying with academyEX and the application and enrolment process that will be followed (including, but not limited to, information needed before entering a contract, the contract itself, insurance requirements, immigration matters, and student fee protection procedures) has been provided to International Students. We are consistently reviewing material to ensure that potential students are able to locate the information they are looking for, and are able to engage with the material appropriately (For example, to support potential Chinese students, a Chinese landing page has been developed).</p> <p>International students that we have had so far have been well supported, through orientation and settling into their programme and during their study. With only small numbers, we have very close connections with international students and are able to engage with them in a personalised way. At Master's level, students also have high levels of independence and strong study skills.</p> <p>We have very strong processes for managing and monitoring Agents that have signed agreements to work with us. This includes detailed agent training with the International Marketing Manager and Academic Director, as well as ongoing support and communications. These relationships are very strong and we hope to continue to build relationships with agents who have high quality students interested in our programmes.</p> <p>With small numbers, the enrolment process for International Students has been very hands-on and closely monitored to ensure that all necessary steps are being taken. This involves the International Marketing Manager, Academic Registrar, Academic Director and Enrolments Team and includes the verification of qualifications, English Language Requirements as well as interviews to ensure that the programme will</p>

support students to meet their goals and expectations. We will continue to refine these processes and streamline our approach as it will be very resource intensive with more applications coming through to be processed. We are also in conversation with NZQA to support our processes for verifying qualifications and assessing the equivalence of international qualifications.

Our current International Student Policy and Procedures covers required statements and outlines processes for variations of enrolment, disciplinary actions, insurance, fee protection and orientation requirements. We have not had any instances where formal complaints or disciplinary action has needed to be investigated.

*Opportunities for Improvement:*

- Engaging further with international learners to understand their wellbeing and safety needs - as our engagement with international learners increases, in different parts of the learning journey, we will continue to be learning ourselves and refining our practices to best meet the needs of international learners studying both onshore and at distance.
- Ongoing conversation and review occurs, but one approach that we will consider taking is the implementation of a quarterly review of our processes and practices against the Code of Practice and outcomes specific to International Students.

<i>Actions (with Owner)</i>	<i>Measure of Success (with Monitoring Plan)</i>
Close engagement with International learners, as they inquire, enrol and begin to study with us to ensure that their needs are all being met in a culturally responsive way - <i>all staff involved with International Students.</i>	Onshore and offshore domestic and International students will provide data sets (e.g. course and qualification completions) that will be compared with each other to ensure that we do not have teaching and learning delivery and activities that result in any inequitable outcomes for any of these groups.
Quarterly Review of Practice against Code - <i>Academic Director and International Marketing Manager</i>	Set up this review cycle (report, schedule meetings).