

# Connecting through integration: Blending Pacific approaches with online technologies

**Judy Taligalu McFall-McCaffery & Stephanie Cook**

University of Auckland Library, Auckland, New Zealand

To date many indigenous and minority students report significant challenges in engaging in the traditional pedagogies of higher education, often resulting in low attendance and achievement. As New Zealand residents Pacific students at the University of Auckland New Zealand are a targeted equity group. Therefore support services and approaches likely to raise academic achievement are being actively explored.

This paper examines the implementation phase of a research project which began in late 2011 in partnership with academic staff to investigate ways of promoting greater curriculum and academic literacy alignment, student engagement and success in academic studies using a blended approach. It involves a three year survey of first year and third year students' information and academic literacy skills. Students' formal and informal feedback is helping inform ongoing enhancements to the blended learning and teaching environment. It argues that for blended approaches to be relevant and successful in minority student contexts, curriculum demands and Pacific cultural approaches and perspectives need to be integrated into learning environments.

The paper will present examples of how Pacific approaches to date have been 'blended' with online technologies and e-learning to create a more flexible and dynamic learning experience for students.

This paper will be of interest to institutions with growing Pacific and other minority populations, seeking to assist students achieve greater academic success.

## Introduction

Over the past two decades, curriculum development in many Australasian higher learning institutions has included the identification and incorporation of graduate attributes or graduate capabilities (Barrie, 2007a). Students are expected to be outfitted with these attributes and their chosen discipline knowledge to help them better cope with the demands and requirements of an increasingly complex employment market (Barnnet, 2000; James, Lefoe, & Hadi, 2004). Integration of these attributes into the curriculum has been shown to be a successful approach. In addition, learning approaches that combine both face-to-face service delivery and modern information technologies are now regularly being suggested in the literature as radically transforming student learning and teaching (Mitchell & Forer, 2010).

This paper explores a research based blended approach for the integration of essential course curriculum information and information/academic literacies into the Pacific Studies undergraduate programme at the University of Auckland.

Critical factors in the successful implementation of blended learning for Pacific learners in New Zealand tertiary studies have been comprehensively examined by Koloto, Katoanga & Tatila (2006) in a report commissioned by the Ministry of Education. Most important was the need for institutionally responsive tailored services for the diverse learning needs of Pacific students. Students did not respond well to 'one size fits all' generic services which they perceive as having few connections to their existing learning, lives, families, cultures, values knowledge and experiences. The report found that a significantly greater focus on the use of blended online learning, along with face-to-face learning and teaching, is a critical factor in Pacific student success. As Mitchell and Forer (2010) argued, "e-learning has to embrace more than the acquisition of knowledge through the use of technology. Learning involves developing social skills and structures, exercising critical thinking and developing a range of communications skills, something that current ICTs are not yet providing." (p.87). Koloto et al (2006) concluded that addressing the need for research into culturally and linguistically blended learning would add significantly to Pacific students' academic success.

However, Pacific or Pasifika<sup>1</sup> is not a homogeneous group but rather is made up of different ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has different languages, cultures, customs, and experiences (Koloto et al, 2006; Manuatu, 200, Pasikale, 1996, 1999). Furthermore, a common generalisation found in research in education is that Pacific people often seem to prefer to learn together in groups; however they also have varied learning styles (Pasikale, 1996). According to Helu-Thaman (2014) it is important for teachers to understand their students, and to utilise Pacific approaches and examples students relate to. A teaching, learning and research environment that upholds cultural democracy and values a diverse student background is crucial to student success. Klipfel (2015) agrees "...the Rogerian model of authentic engagement requires not only understanding the nature and extent of a particular student's information need; this approach also requires understanding something about the student's needs as an individual person as well. It involves students sharing with the librarian who they really are." (p.23). To ensure academic success and the relevancy of learning to tomorrow's world, educators must respond more creatively to incorporate these elements which include: what the students bring into the classroom with them, their prior experiences of libraries, existing academic and information (AIL) literacy knowledge and skill levels. Identifying specific blended learning, teaching and learning strategies that may work better for Pacific students in tertiary institutions is the key theme of this paper.

## **Pacific students & equity at the University of Auckland**

In the 2013 Census, Pacific peoples make up 7.4% (295,941) of the New Zealand population and about 66% (194,958) of this population live in Auckland, one of the largest Polynesian cities of the world. The Pacific ethnic group has the highest proportion of children 35.7% (aged 0-14) and this therefore has implications for the education system.

The University of Auckland is the biggest university in New Zealand, and in 2014 had 41,930 students (headcount), of which 3,524 or 8.4 % were Pacific students (equivalent to 8.2% EFTS or 2,751 students). Of the 3,524 (headcount) Pacific students, 651 were in postgraduate studies. 1,568 or 44.5% of the 3,524 Pacific students were in the Arts Faculty (where the School of Pacific Studies is located). The majority 59.75% (937) were enrolled in Pacific Studies courses (including Pacific languages). The other Faculties had: 1,247 Pacific students in Science; 858 in Education; 600 in Business; 579 in Medical Health Sciences; 360 in Law; 287 in National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries; and 178 in Engineering.

While some Pacific students enter tertiary studies in New Zealand with excellent entry qualifications, on average Pacific students enter with the lowest entry qualifications and take longer on average to complete their qualifications (Anae, Anderson, Benseman & Coxon, 2002; Benseman, Coxon, Anderson & Anae, 2006; Madjar, McKinley, Deynzer & van der Merwe, 2010). The University of Auckland is committed to raising the academic achievement for targeted groups; this includes Pacific students. The University Charter states that "Māori and Pacific engagement in academic life confers much of the distinctive and special character of this University. The University recognises the importance of engaging Māori and Pacific students in high level degree education that will provide the chance to enhance their potential and life choices and prepare them to participate fully in rewarding professional and knowledge based vocations. But, more than this, there are benefits, both to the University and to the country, of building a strong core of Māori and Pacific staff, providing programmes that attract Māori and Pacific students, and contributing to Māori and Pacific intellectual, social, economic and cultural advancement." (The University of Auckland Charter, 2003, p.3).

The enhancement of the student learning environment is a major objective of the University's Strategic Plan 2013-2017. It is also Key Objective 1 of the 2015 Libraries & Learning Services Annual Plan with opportunities for "Enhanced integration of academic and information literacies into the curriculum; review and repositioning of institutional Information Literacy Guidelines; review and development of online learning tools; enhanced learning development opportunities for Māori and Pacific students." (Libraries and Learning Services Annual Plan, 2015, p.2). These include supporting strategies for

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<sup>1</sup> The term Pasifika is widely used in New Zealand to describe Pacific peoples and communities now living permanently in NZ and differentiate them from Pacific peoples and communities in the islands themselves.

collaborations in academic and information literacies integration (AIL), online learning resources and tools development, and effective evaluations of learning development initiatives for Māori and Pacific students.

The University's Plans and Strategies for Pacific students are in alignment with the New Zealand Ministry of Education's Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017 (PEP) which is "aimed at raising Pasifika learners' participation, engagement and achievement from early learning through to tertiary education. The PEP's vision is to see 'Five out of five Pasifika learners participating, engaging and achieving in education, secure in their identities, languages and cultures and contributing fully to Aotearoa New Zealand's social, cultural and economic wellbeing'" (New Zealand, Ministry of Education, 2015).

Furthermore, one of the six priorities of the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission's Strategy is specifically aimed at "boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika" and recognises that "better information and support for students, their families and communities is needed to lift participation and achievement levels, as are learning opportunities that help to engage Pasifika with their cultures." (New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission, 2015).

"In particular during the term of this strategy, the Government is seeking further strengthening of the tertiary education sector's focus on supporting improved achievement from two key groups: Māori and Pasifika learners. By 2030 30% of New Zealanders will be Māori or Pasifika, and as such it is essential that tertiary education improves its delivery to these groups." (New Zealand, Tertiary Education Commission, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/overall-strategies-and-policies/tertiary-education-strategy>).

## **Project background**

Prior to 2011, information and academic literacies were not consistently integrated into the Pacific Studies undergraduate courses (McFall & Cook, 2014). Library workshops were delivered separately in face-to-face subject related and voluntary generic workshops. Consequently, throughout their tertiary study, many Pacific students often do not see library workshops as important or as part of their courses. Although academic staff viewed academic and information literacy (AIL) skills as important, they were seldom linked to learning outcomes and assessments set in course requirements.

This was a familiar experience and challenge not only to Pacific teachers but also to the then Liaison Librarian to Pasifika services Judy McFall-McCaffery, at the Auckland College of Education (2001-2004). Together they sought to address this situation with the introduction of a compulsory Library module. Judy found working collaboratively with a cohort of staff, students and their programme advisory committee in a Pacific Islands Early Childhood Teacher Education programme (PIECE) demonstrated the benefits of building library skills and ICT literacies into the programme. In 2004, the Auckland College of Education was absorbed into the University of Auckland's Faculty of Education. Judy took up the new position as the Pasifika Liaison Librarian in early 2005 on the University's city campus with cross faculties information support service responsibilities.

The position's primary role was to provide library and information support services to staff and students in the Centre for Pacific Studies. The challenges faced by the Pacific students on the city campus were very similar to the PIECE programme experience (McFall-Ma'ilei, 2004). The structure and organisation of faculties and departments, and staff buy-in and perceptions about the role of AIL were however very different. The work to apply effective library and information literacies strategies from earlier evidence and practice (McFall-Ma'ilei, 2004) was not sustainable long term as it only involved working with individual lecturers rather than across the whole Pacific Studies programme with all staff (McFall-McCaffery & Cook, 2014).

In late 2011, a research proposal by the authors to investigate student experiences with the integration of AIL in Pacific Studies was approved by the University's Ethics Committee. A collaborative partnership with academic staff resulted in the initial stage of the project mapping the Pacific Studies courses against the University's Graduate Profile.

The University of Auckland's Graduate Profile (2003) identifies 18 key graduate attributes under the three categories of specialised knowledge; intellectual; personal qualities and skills. Two key attributes are academic and information literacies (AIL). Information literacy (IL) is defined as using information to learn and to research (Bruce, 2008; Wang, 2010). The authors subscribe to the views of Freire (1985, 1972) and Lankshear (1987) who have always argued literacy needs to be more than the functional decontextualised academic literacy that many AIL literacy courses now seem to be developing and promoting. AIL literacy needs to teach students how to critically read and understand the wider context of the 'world behind the words' as the key task. This positions students at the centre of teaching and learning; approaching teaching from how students understand, view and experience the world (Freire, 1985; Lankshear 1987; Helu-Thaman, 1993, 2014; Taufe'ulungaki, 2014). Initial assignment topics and questions of enquiry may well change and bring up unexpected discoveries and require new interpretations of questions and topics. The focus is more on how these questions can relate to student lives, what they are interested in, and how this new knowledge and engagement can be used in their academic development and professional lives (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2010; Johanssen Fua, 2009; Sanga, 2002; Taufe'ulungaki, 2002, 2014).

Our curriculum mapping process, for example, found little correspondence and integration between the University of Auckland's graduate attributes promoting critical thinking and information literacy and the current generic library and information skills being taught. Outcomes from decontextualised generic teaching of skills, which had limited curriculum specific content and contexts, were often mixed with low student and academic staff engagement.

Table 1.  
*AIL Project stages*

Project Stages	Details	Timeframe	Developments
Stage One:	Curriculum analysis focusing on obtaining course information including course learning outcomes, course assignments and course assessments.	Late 2011 to early 2012	Completed
Stage Two:	Mapping the undergraduate programme curriculum against the University Graduate Profile focusing on the courses which contain both assignment essay questions and exam questions.	Early 2012	Completed
Stage Three:	Conduct a three year survey of year 1 and year 3 students to gain a better understanding of students' knowledge and skills in information literacy.	Ethics approval from April 2012-April 2015	Analyse survey data at end of survey and compare results to other formal feedback (via online course site and library workshops) and informal student feedback.

Stage Four:	Collaboration with the academic staff to integrate information and academic literacies across the curriculum from 100 level to 300 level courses.	Phase one of Stage Four: Began integration of AIL in 100 level courses from Semester 1, 2013 until all 100 courses completed. Then scaffold skills into 200 and 300 level courses – ongoing.	To develop a skills development framework with marking rubrics. Investigate correlation between skills development, assessment and academic achievement.
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Stage one and Stage two of the project have been discussed in papers presented at the 2013 HERDSA conference (Wang, McFall-McCaffery, & Wolfgramm-Foliaki, 2013); and at the 2014 LIANZA conference (McFall-McCaffery & Cook, 2014). In brief, the mapping process helped identify gaps where AIL could be integrated into the curriculum and helped inform the remaining stages of the project. The current paper reports on the work being undertaken in Stage four of the project and some of the challenges and complexities of the integration process. These include the fact that the programme structure only has one compulsory 100 level paper for students wishing to major in Pacific Studies. Consequently a number of students take other department 100 level papers and enter the Pacific 200 and 300 level optional papers without prior experience of the AIL pilot courses. Scaffolding the AIL skills and building from 100 level to 200 level courses is a challenge we are currently reviewing with lecturers and the project team.

## Working with Pacific students and staff

As discussed earlier, the research to date on the effective use of blended learning by Pacific students (Clayton, Rata-Skudder & Baral, 2004; Koloto et al 2006; Marsters 2008) requires a context that acknowledges and uses Pacific approaches (Helu-Thaman, 2014; Mara & Marsters, 2009; McFall-McCaffery & Cook, 2014; Sanga, 2002; Taufeu lungaki, 2002, 2014). Koloto, Katoanga & Tatila's (2006) comprehensive research report of critical success factors for effective use of e-learning by Pacific learners found that programmes which specifically sought to address the following resulted in more positive student participation, retention and success:

- Understanding and acknowledging levels of preparedness of students for tertiary study and the willingness to begin and build from where they actually are. This includes the provision of more comprehensive bridging and orientation programmes.
- Institutional responses supporting, acknowledging, incorporating and utilising student's strengths and experiences rather than a deficit focus on what they do not have and cannot do.
- Quality staff who accept a role as change agents able to draw on family support, spiritual and cultural values, the importance of quality face-to-face relationships, being available to students and a willingness to explore and apply Pacific pedagogies. Koloto, Katoanga & Tatila (2006) define Pacific pedagogies as an "integration of teaching and learning methods that are informed by and validate Pacific values, worldviews, knowledge and experience..." (p.4).
- Teaching and learning that provides for a diverse range of pedagogical approaches and that engage both the mind 'cognitive intelligence' and the heart 'emotional intelligence'. This includes both face-to-face and blended learning. For example peer teaching and group work; experiential strategies; Pacific case studies examples, metaphors, visual demonstration; building motivation and self-confidence; guiding, mentoring and tutoring; pastoral care; and strong personal organizing for learning strategies.

The role of institutional support to enable Pacific values, cultures, identity, languages, worldviews and experiences to be embedded into programmes is essential and has been endorsed in the Pasifika Education Plan (MOE 2012).

Providing such changes in services to Pacific students and staff is challenging. For this reason identifying and making these features explicit and transparent is an essential first step in AIL integrated blended teaching and learning for Pacific students and staff. This will now be discussed, beginning with the importance of relationships.

Firstly, of most importance to Pacific and Maori people are the type and quality of relationships and interactions (Airini, Anae, Mila-Schaaf, with Coxon, Mara & Sanga, 2010; Bishop, Berryman & Wearmouth, 2014). Spending time building and maintaining quality trusting relationships and networking is time well invested. This means recognising faces; knowing names; saying hello or acknowledging them when you see them again; being genuinely interested in their lives and study (Chu, 2012; McFall-McCaffery, 2011); and in making the institution user friendly, not so overwhelming and faceless (Gayton, 2002; Helu-Thaman, 1985; Tuhou, 2009; Utumapu-McBride, 2013). As one of the students commented in a student survey, “X is extremely helpful, but in other classes it would be nice for the librarian of each dept/ faculty to come in and help.” For Pacific services staff this also means having an open door policy; providing extra opportunities for 1-1 tutoring; having a working space in places students gather such as the Pasifika Fale Office building rather than just staying in the library space; attending Pacific staff and student events during and outside of work time; and being more visible and accessible. This includes strategic community occasions and the essential related networking opportunities this provides in engaging with students and staff in non-formal settings. As the Māori proverb says, ‘Te kanohi kitea’- only the face that is regularly seen, is known, trusted, and appreciated.

Findings from a 2004 survey on the use of library services by the PIECE or Pasifika Early Childhood Education Diploma students (fulltime and part time) by McFall-Ma’ilei (McCaffery), showed Pacific students valued Library workshops that involved Pacific staff, examples, languages and approaches. Library workshops integrated into the curriculum as a compulsory module of the programme worked better for students. Many students appreciated the use of Pacific languages both in general communication and in Library workshops to aid with their initial encounter and understanding of search concepts and library terms. The Library entrance of the former Auckland College of Education, now the University Faculty of Education, has greetings in Pacific and Māori languages, with separate Māori and Pacific collections and displays. The University’s General Library on the city campus (where the Māori and Pacific Services staff are located) has bilingual signage in English and Māori languages, with New Zealand, Pacific and Māori collections and artwork on its Ground Floor.

The majority of Pacific students at the University are of Samoan and Tongan ethnicity. The utilisation of Pacific languages, Samoan and Tongan<sup>2</sup> in workshops, in communicating concepts, in conversations, in humour always generate positive responses from students, and contribute to affirm relationships. Any attempt well intentioned is welcomed and appreciated by students. This focus on establishing and maintaining quality interpersonal relationships is important. As Bishop, Berryman & Wearmouth (2014) found in their research, improving communications and relationships with Māori students led to statistically significant academic outcomes for secondary school students.

Relationships between staff and students are important then, and therefore staff attitudes and understandings of the information literacy pedagogy (Barrie, 2007b; McGuinness, 2006) have a significant bearing on how AIL is received and integrated into the course content (McFall-McCaffery & Cook, 2014). Koloto et al, (2006) report that many tertiary staff have the perception that AIL is not their job. This has a major impact on students’ willingness to use libraries and attendance at library information skills development workshops. Koloto found student attitudes were more positive where a tertiary Private Training Establishment and their Pacific staff had developed integrated Pacific focused student programmes.

Research from Garrison and Kanuka (2004), Jeffery, Milne, Suddaby and Higgins (2012), Johnson, Adams, Estrada and Freeman (2014), all suggest that as students spend more and more time on the internet, using a blended approach is more successful. These include: applying online technologies, e-learning components, flipped classroom, videos, and online activities. This enables students to utilise their existing online skills in an academic context whilst still ensuring face-to-face interaction. Clayton, Rata-Skudder, & Baral (2004) indicate e-learning offers opportunities for Pasifika learners to overcome some of the barriers presented by traditional modes of study. It provides students the flexibility to manage their study and family commitments.

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<sup>2</sup> Samoan is the largest Pacific group (48.7% of Pacific pop) and Tongan the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest (20.4%), and both are the strongest Pacific languages in New Zealand. Judy is fluent in both languages.

Undertaking an integrated and blended approach, this AIL project makes skills development an integral part of the academic curriculum, and seeks to address the challenges students face and bring with them to classes.

## Methodology: Pacific approaches

The project team set out to explore the possibilities for a blended/hybrid approach to integrating AIL attributes into 100 level courses. This initial phase of integration included an exploration of blended and culturally responsive pedagogies to better prepare and scaffold students into more successful academic learning at an earlier stage. The integration in 100 level courses includes continuous reviewing and evaluation of the effectiveness of the changes through a series of staged phases. These are exemplified in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Key findings of integration from Phase 1 of Stage 4 after the first year*

Key Findings of integration from Phase 1 of Stage 4 in the first year			
Courses	Complexities	Challenges	Major Feedback
Pac 100	Building skills onto next level. AIL not visible as part of assessment	Technical challenges with peer reviews online submissions	More application of Pacific approaches; referencing and evaluating resources
Pac 105	Perception of AIL, students do not see the link to assessment of AIL	First Year Experience timing impact on attendance	Evaluating resources. More active referral by tutors of students to use online course site
Pac 110	Staff have varying degrees of AIL understanding impacts on student use and referral	Continuity when staff changes happen during Semester	Positive about use of guiding questions

To find out what students already knew and could do, we drew on informal and formal feedback received from *tālanoa* or dialogue and communications, in emails, and meetings with lecturers, tutors, and student class representatives. All students complete their formal course evaluation at the end of every semester. In terms of the Libraries and Learning Services workshops, an online generic feedback form is made available for students to complete after every workshop. These data were combined with an ethnographic participant observation approach (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010), which is incorporated and woven into this project. The authors also draw on our years of experience working with students and academic staff, including colleagues and teams we collaborate with. These insider observations and notes have contributed to the trustworthiness and richness of the data we have drawn on and analysed.

Indigenous Pacific research methods, concepts and processes were explored for usefulness in this project and adapted for use with students and staff in gathering, recording and analysing data as well as for developing teaching and learning pedagogical processes. These needed to be “culturally sensitive, methodologically rigorous, and ultimately useful” (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

- *Teu le vā* is the process of establishing and working within relationships of trust and reciprocity in all aspects of the research process (Airini et al, 2010). It requires empowering participants, their families and communities as full partners in the research from planning to implementation and outcomes.
- *Tālanoa* which is an established research tool for gathering data within the *Teu le vā* framework using Pacific based values in culturally and linguistically responsive and respectful interactions and dialogue (Halapua, 2000; Havea, 2010; Manuatu, 2003; Otsuka, 2006; Robinson & Robinson, 2005; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Vaiioleti, 2006). *Tālanoa* appears to

produce more authentic responses from Pacific participants than can be derived from other research methods (Vaioleti 2006).

- The *Kakala* research framework is a Tongan education research process which uses Tongan metaphor and analogy (Helu-Thaman, 1992; Manuatu, 2000; Johansson-Fua, 2009, 2014) to demystify and conduct the research in culturally familiar and empowering ways.

These research methods, Pacific research and process strategies help innovate and transform the student learning environment for Pacific students and staff (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2010; Manuatu, 2000; Johansson-Fua, 2009, 2014). They are used as processes to help build quality learning and teaching relationships with lecturers, tutors and students in formal and informal face-to-face communication, emails, workshops, tutorials, staff and student functions, discussions, and subject research consultations.

## Some initial student reflections and feedback

From 2013 formal feedback from first year students in the initial 100 level courses in the AIL project has been collected. This three year survey, which ends in 2015, includes students enrolled in 300 level Pacific Studies courses and provides an insight into students' perceptions of the AIL skills they currently use and their future needs. The findings, which are yet to be fully analysed, will assist us in the ongoing revision, re-design, delivery, and implementation of a blended approach to the AIL integration process.

In addition to the survey, the online course sites for the 100 courses developed for this project includes a voluntary reflection and feedback option for students to complete. Although the reflection section was made available online, the course lecturer recommended a printed version also be handed out during the last lecture in order to get more feedback. Forty six forms were received, which is approximately half the number of students who attended the lecture that day. The three questions with findings are represented below in **Figures 2, 3 & 4**.

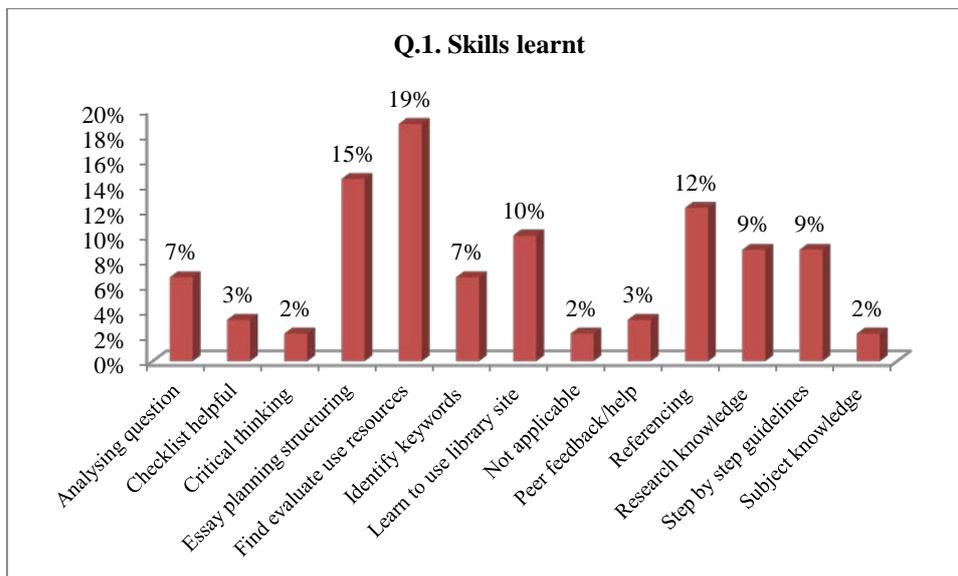


Figure 2. Question 1 Write down at least two key things you learnt from completing the research steps. How did you apply these to your assignment essay?

The three highest ranking skills learnt were: finding, evaluating and using the resources; essay planning, writing and structuring; and referencing.

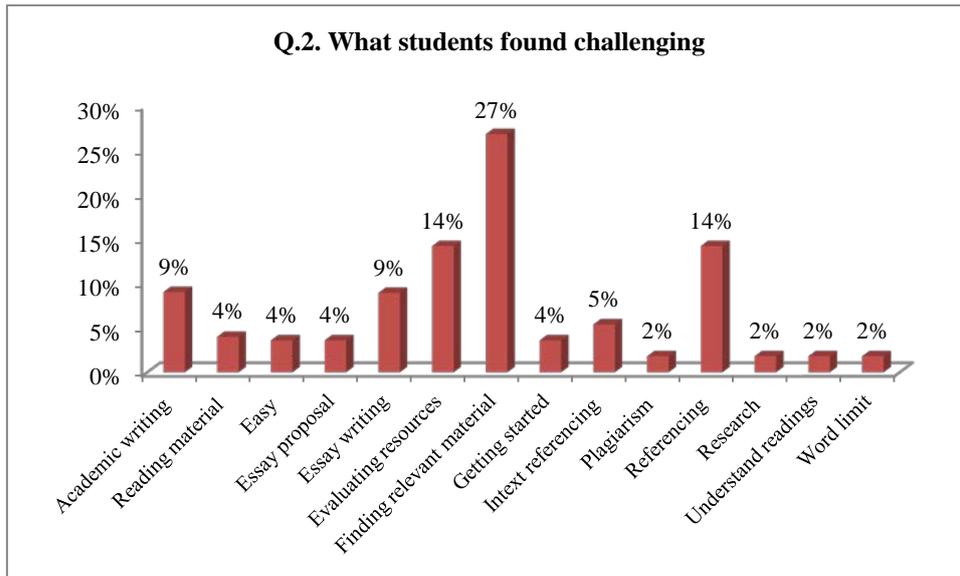


Figure 3. Question 2 What part of the assignment research did you find challenging and why?

Two of the skills students learnt and applied most in their assignment (see Figure 2 Question 1 - finding and evaluating relevant materials, and referencing) are the same skills they also found the most challenging from their replies in Figure 3 Question 2 above. Some of the comments included:

- “the research was challenging as there is a lot of information and it can be hard narrowing it down”
- “(in) first year of university (we) encounter different styles of referencing...”
- “...trying to put my words into a sentence and which will be the perfect words to use.”
- “finding relevant books on the topic.”

Other comments provided by students included having exemplars on how to write essay proposals; workshops for first year students on referencing; in-text citation and preparing bibliographies.

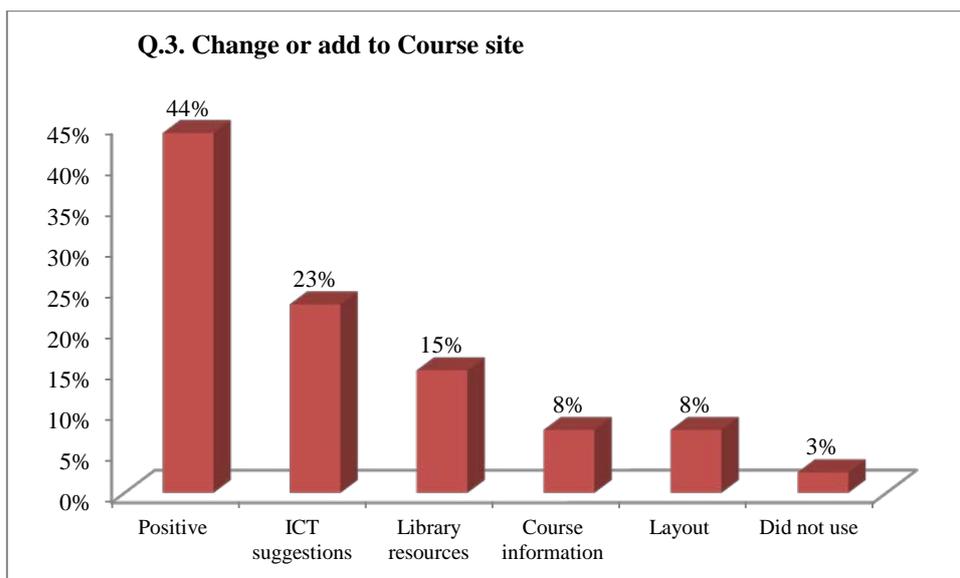


Figure 4 Question 3 What would you change about, or add to, the internet/electronic services and sites for this course?

Question 3 (Figure 4) was interesting as students provided various suggestions for improvements to the online course site. 44% of the replies were all positive about the online course site and its contents. Other responses included suggestions for: uploading recordings of lectures, including powerpoints and slides onto CECIL (Student Learning Management System); including a list of core readings for the essay assignment rather than having to do individual searching; and providing more examples and essay exemplars. Some of the comments indicated students were engaging with the online environment and thinking about other ways of accessing course information and services. For instance:

- “Add recordings! Other than that it was a great course.”
- “Lecture slides are up on CECIL before actual lectures so it allows us to take notes during the slideshow presentations and lectures. Question forum online to lecturer.”
- “Listening to the course lectures on Cecil so we have a great more understanding of course lectures!”
- “The lecture recordings because the information is really interesting to go over again.”
- “Watching the videos that was [*sic*] in some of the lectures.”
- “The video clips should be uploaded and have better access.”
- “Powerpoint slide on Cecil. Not by PDF, but by PPT...cannot edit to suitable format.”
- “Having our tests online.”
- “Clickers for powerpoint.”

The provision of a reflection and feedback option on the course site was most valuable to seek further thoughts from students.

## Blending approaches

Blending Pacific approaches with e-learning approaches enabled a flexible and dynamic learning experience for students. Essential to the success of using a blended approach was the collaboration and buy-in from the course coordinators and tutors. Ongoing *tālanoa* and meetings were held to discuss how technology could be used to enhance teaching and learning within the Pacific context. In addition, basic training was provided to ensure staff felt confident to use and promote the online course sites and associated online activities to their students.

The University’s purpose-built course development tool CourseBuilder<sup>3</sup> was used to create online course sites for three 100 Level courses (Pacific 100, 105, 110). These sites were then embedded into the students’ learning management system (CECIL) to ensure seamless access to both the site and learning management system.

The online course sites integrated relevant course information including students’ lecture timetable, readings, and assessments. The sites also incorporated interactive learning objects to provide a stimulating learning environment. These included videos, quizzes, drag and drop activities, and online chat/instant messaging. The online course sites were combined with face-to-face information literacy workshops, a targeted learning session (First year Experience) for two of the courses, and *Vaka Moana* (informal course tutorials facilitated by course tutors focusing on specific knowledge, understandings and academic skills needed for Pacific Studies).

The online course sites all included the following:

- Online activities incorporating Pacific concepts. Examples were also contextualised based on the students’ assessment topics. Quizzes provided instant feedback. (Refer to Figure 11 example p. 13).
- A diagram was included to visually present the research process (Figure 5 below). Students could ‘hover’ their mouse over the diagram and text would pop up with additional information (see example of Step 2 in Figure 5). The diagram used actual photographs of Pacific students. The use of real students appealed to the Pacific students as they could relate to them. The images

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<sup>3</sup> Purpose-built online course development tool provided by the Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education, University of Auckland.

created a lot of interest in workshops and we received offers from students to be our models for future sites!

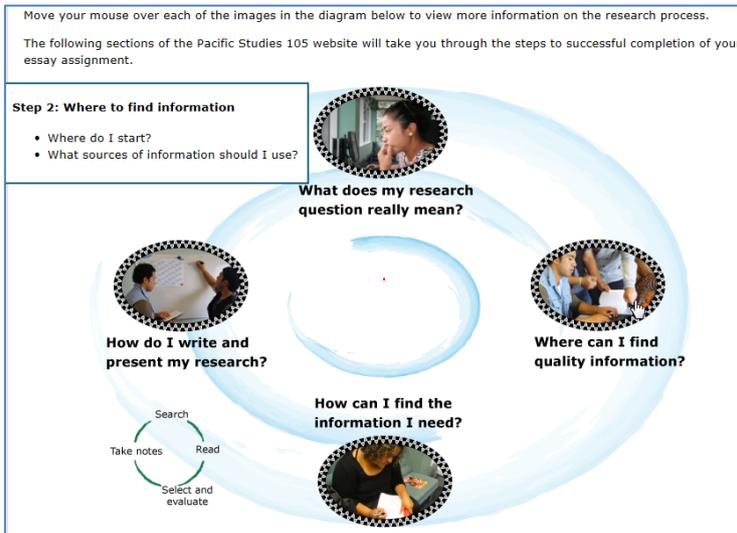


Figure 5. Research process diagram

- Student notes - students were able to submit reflections on their research journey. Lecturers, tutors, and librarians could view the reflections in order to better understand the areas of research students struggled with.
- Online chat function and comments box – students could use these functions to ask tutors questions.
- Usage of the course sites was able to be tracked online – it was possible to view when students accessed various pages of the course site and how often. Individual student usage could also be monitored. This provided lecturers/tutors with some indication of if/how/when students were utilising the site. Statistics were also recorded in Google Analytics.

Figure 6 below shows page views for the Pacific 105 course from August- November 2013 (6/11/2013) in Google Analytics. There were a total of 8,460 page views. Peaks are during assignment times.

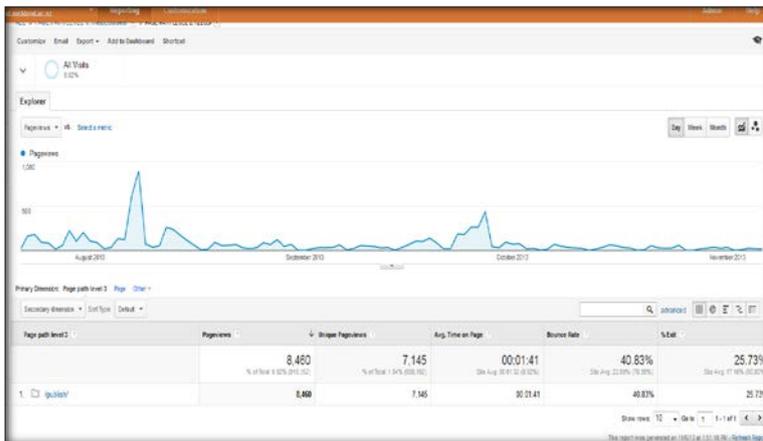


Figure 6. Online course site page views from Pacific 105

The following sections explain the application of additional blended approaches specific to courses.

## Pacific Studies 100 and Pacific Studies 105

Students received an initial face-to-face orientation from the Pasifika Liaison Librarian to the site as part of their first or second lecture, and later in their tutorials by tutors. Students were briefly introduced to the site and shown where and how to access it, and what information the site contained.

Students' first assignment was 'scaffolded'. They were required to submit an essay proposal online for peer review through Turnitin's<sup>4</sup> Peermark prior to submission of their final essay. Students were randomly assigned two proposals to read and review; lecturers provided a guideline and rubric on how to conduct the peer review. Peer feedback was anonymous. The course lecturer and tutors had access to students' peer reviews and also had further opportunity to provide more guidance and assistance during the First Year Experience targeted learning session (FYE) piloted by the University to provide a more coherent introduction to academic study.

Both 100 level courses included a First Year Experience (FYE) learning session. This was a face-to-face session held in the Library in order to encourage students to use the Library. Students attended the session in their tutorial time. The FYE provided an informal opportunity to chat to relevant staff (library, learning advisers, and course tutors) regarding any questions they had about their assignment. Computers were available for students to use if required or they could use their own mobile devices to access the online course site and search for information. We developed an activity sheet to assist staff and students that was positively received (Figure 7).

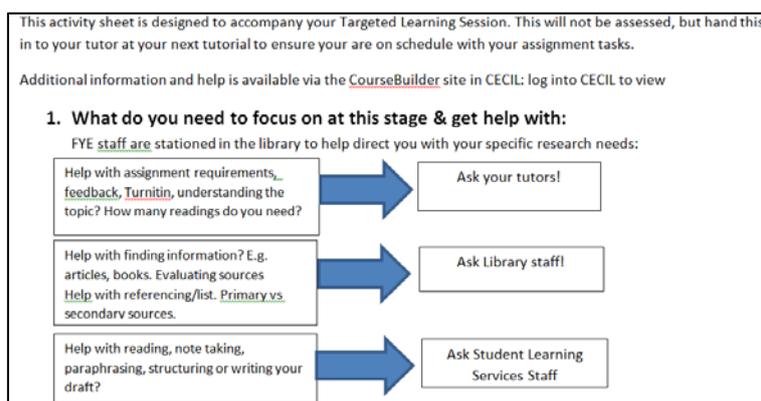


Figure 7. Sample of the FYE activity sheet

While a number of other Faculty courses had much higher numbers attending their FYE targeted learning sessions, the Pacific 100 session had the highest number of enquiries based on percentage of enrolments. The number of enquiries was 38% of the total number of students enrolled (see Figure 8 below), attributed largely to the lecturer's active support and his presence with the tutors at the session. The highest number of questions asked by students during the FYE session related to finding additional readings and referencing (see Figure 9 below). Incidentally these two areas: finding readings and referencing, also ranked high in the reflection feedback received from Pacific 100 students at the end of the semester (refer to Figure 3 on page 10). The FYE queries percentage ranking and reflection feedback correlated. 'Understanding the question' section was not included as Pacific 100 students had already done their essay proposal prior to the FYE session.

<sup>4</sup> An electronic plagiarism detection service used by the University of Auckland and many universities worldwide. Peermark is Turnitin's peer reviewing function.

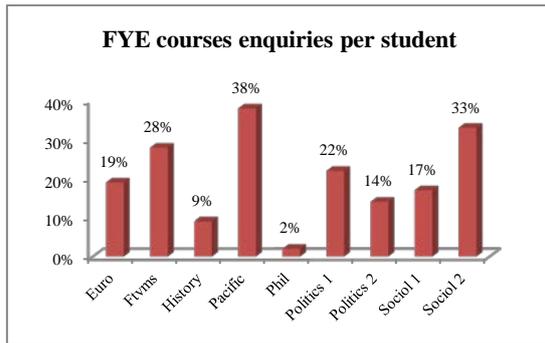


Figure 8. FYE courses enquiries

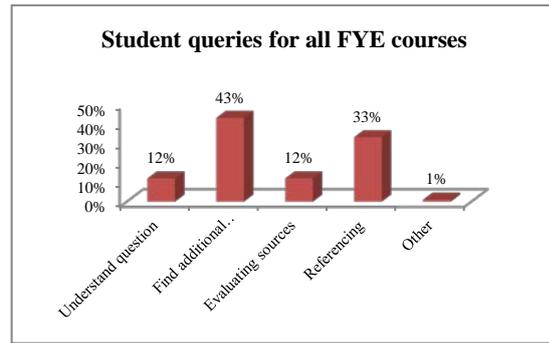


Figure 9. Overall areas of FYE student queries

Students in both courses were also required to attend an AIL workshop focusing on their assignment. Although the workshop was face-to-face, it also utilised e-learning opportunities. Students searched for information online, they recorded their search process in the online course site, and there were activities they could complete in class, including a drag and drop referencing activity. They could also continue to use the site outside of class time ensuring flexible learning. These activities, though not formally assessed, assisted us to gain more knowledge of students' understanding of tasks and skills levels, and inform ongoing improvements.

For Pacific Studies 105 the 'flipped classroom' approach was also utilised. Students were asked to complete a pre-AIL workshop activity online (see Figure 10 below).

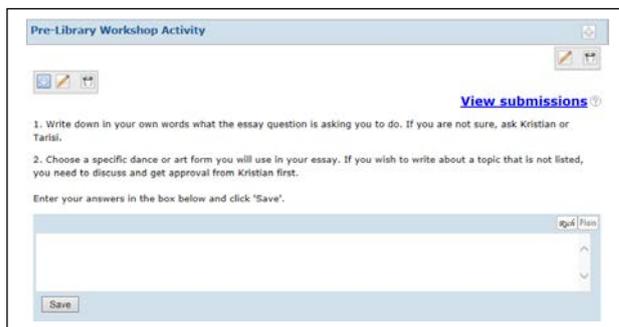


Figure 10. Pre AIL workshop activity

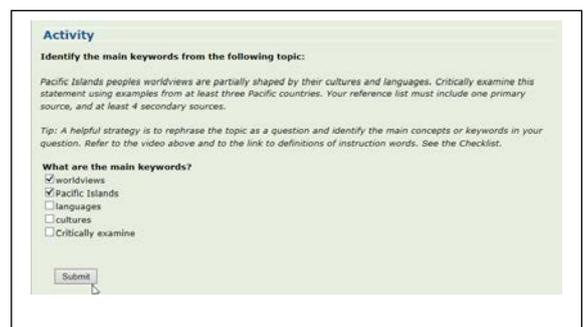


Figure 11. Pre AIL workshop keywords activity

The activity asked them to consider their research topic and identify the keywords they would use to search before they attended the workshop (see Figure 11 above).

Students could save their work in the online course site and refer back to it in the Library workshop that followed. This provided the opportunity to work face-to-face with the students, to communicate using Pacific examples and *tālanoa* to discuss their topics and queries. Students were encouraged to seek one-to-one help from Library staff directly or by phone or email and during *Vaka Moana* tutorials. This guided approach is not seen as spoon feeding but helpful, supplemented by the self-directed activities on the online course site.

### Pacific Studies 110

Experience with Pacific 100 and 105 courses were significant in assisting us and the Pacific 110 lecturer to develop a site for 110 that utilised more effectively the visual examples she used with the contextualised coursework tasks. Using the flipped classroom approach, students were required to watch videos/read articles, briefly respond to guiding questions on the videos and readings before attending their tutorial.

The videos were embedded within the online course site. Students' answers to the guiding questions were stored within the site. This meant that the course lecturers and tutors could view each student's submission prior to the lecture/tutorial and identify areas for discussion in the face-to-face lecture/tutorial. This worked well and the majority of students completed the questions prior to attending the lecture/tutorial.

This approach was also utilised in the pre AIL workshop activity. Students were asked to note down what their assignment question meant, and then choose a specific cultural example to use in their assignment. Again, this information was submitted within the online course site. Students' submissions could be viewed before the face-to-face AIL workshop. This meant Library staff and course tutors could identify any problem areas and address these in class.

Other approaches used in Pacific Studies 110 included an online note taking activity (See Figure 12) and online readings with associated discussion questions (see example Figure 13).

Figure 12. Online note taking activity

Figure 13. Discussion questions

Student tutorials and mentoring programmes such as the *Vaka Moana*, where Pacific Studies staff assist students with academic support key to students' progress in class, worked well. As Mayeda, Keil, Dutton & Ofamo'oni (2014) found in successful mentoring programmes, students "were more likely to attend tutorials, approach teaching staff and earn better grades than those not involved." (p.167). Furthermore, they claim that staff also benefit from this interaction in increasing their cultural knowledge. In our case, the additional insight into students' needs gained through tālanoa is hugely constructive.

Other initiatives that worked well included:

- The online course site's one-stop-shop approach was helpful to students as it embedded AIL skills activities 'visually' with step by step guides, checklists, self-help activities, and relevant course information.
- The integrated approach undertaken utilising the FYE targeted learning sessions, workshops, pre-library workshop activities, and use of concepts and examples in a coordinated manner for students.
- Guided scaffolded activities built in to the course curriculum. These activities required students to attend sessions rather than being optional extra-curricular sessions. This greater structuring and organising of student activities appears to be very successful leading to improved attendance and greater engagement, and more positive perceptions of AIL as an integral part of their course, not separate.
- Endorsement of the online course site by the lecturer in the first week of lectures. The lecturer gave us time in the first lecture to introduce the site to students and promote AIL skills and activities as integral parts of their course. Attendance in the first lectures, and at *Vaka Moana* tutorials were most useful to us in understanding the expectations of the course, and provided us with further opportunities to engage with students and staff.
- Working closely with other key student support services staff provided us with access to first year students during orientation, and the opportunity to conduct the surveys.

- The use of the online peer review activity proved successful, despite some technical issues. Academic staff and students reported technical problems with Turnitin and the limited IT support available to them. Despite the technical issues the peer reviewing activity has continued to be used successfully in other Pacific Studies 100 level courses.
- Students liked having everything accessible in one place. Analysis of feedback from students and lecturers/tutors on the online course site was extremely positive (see Fig. 4). Based on Google Analytics and monitoring of the course site, students regularly visited the site and accessed relevant information at the point of need especially at assessment time (see Fig. 6).

Examples of student feedback on the course site:

- “It was like a checklist for me. I used it to check whether I was on the right track and this really helped in terms of planning and getting my essay completed”.
- “I learnt new methods on how to find and locate sources for both assessments. Learnt things I didn’t know before.”
- “It provided skills that we can use throughout our years at university. It is also applicable to other courses besides Pacific studies.”

Examples of staff feedback:

- “... thanks for the amazing innovation that you have provided with coursebuilder. It was a great success and hope to continue working with you in the future.”
- “... thank you for all the work you did for the Pacific 100 website, both to get it to this point, and to integrate it with all those other university resources. I, and all of us here at Pacific Studies, are deeply appreciative of your work, and I wanted to be sure to acknowledge it in a way that made these sentiments, and my gratitude clear.”

The use of the flipped classroom approach has met with mixed success but shows significant potential. It worked well initially in Pacific Studies 110 where most of the students completed the pre-tutorial readings and associated AIL online activities. However, due to a change in staff later in the course, student online AIL task completions decreased dramatically. This can be attributed to new staff not being involved in the initial *tālanoa*/dialogue and agreement to use a flipped approach and highlights the issues of how to maintain blended learning when staff leave; the importance of *teu le vā* developing and maintaining new and ongoing relationships, collaborations, and communications; training; and continued *tālanoa* with staff. For Pacific 105, the flipped classroom activity for the information literacy workshop had limited uptake by the students. Only a small number of students completed the activity before attending the workshop. This may have been because of a lack of use by postgraduate course tutors during course tutorials and therefore less incentive for students to complete pre-workshop activities.

## Where next? Future developments

### The need for new types of collaboration in teaching and learning

Integral to the success of the project are partnerships and collaborations with University teams and programmes that are focused on Pasifika student academic achievement.

As the project team we are actively seeking ways of improving the integration process through collegial collaboration with, and utilisation of, other teams’ expertise to strengthen and build on current practice and research. Recently the project team approached Māori and Pasifika staff in the University’s Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education (CLear) to consider the project as a resource for teaching Māori and Pasifika students in 2015 as part of CLear’s ‘Student Engagement and Achievement’ theme. The project is culturally relevant, evidence-based and programme embedded and will benefit Pacific Studies students and Pasifika across the University. The project team is also meeting/*tālanoa* with Libraries and Learning Services staff across the University (which includes Student Learning Services Advisers) to scope what staff are doing around integration of AIL in faculties with a large number of Māori and Pasifika students. The team is seeking more active collaborations with teaching staff, student

mentors and support advisers through meetings and programmes to provide better coordinated services, and to use relevant approaches. With Subject Librarians across faculties that have significant numbers of Pacific students, the aim is to provide more interdisciplinary Subject Guides (McFall-McCaffery, 2008), teach joint workshops, and deliver more collaborative orientation and induction activities.

As noted by Koloto et al (2006) the training of staff in technologies using blended learning is very important, and getting them to use and to promote it to students is also very important. Time needs to be invested in this area as familiarisation and confidence in the technology have significant implications in the success of blended learning. For instance, students' use of the online course site is highly dependent on referral and use by teaching staff. Linking back to the course site in tutorial sessions such as *Vaka Moana* would endorse and reinforce the use of the site by students and development of AIL skills if staff promote it.

Above all we acknowledge the importance of having trusting relationships with academic staff. This has involved getting their buy-in to allow us to pilot the AIL integration and blended approach with them. Their contribution to, and use of, the online course site required a substantial commitment to a mutually beneficial partnership with us. It also required them to develop new skills and expertise in order to take advantage of the potential of this pilot programme. Their support was remarkable. The next challenge is to continue to utilise a blended approach with other courses in order to scaffold skills. This next phase will involve the exploration and *tālanoa* with staff about effective strategies to better scaffold AIL skills. The Research Skills Development Framework (RSDF) is a possible tool for consideration and/or adaption to suit Pacific student's learning needs.

Strategies that have worked such as the flipped approach could be tried with another 100 level course. Technology such as the use of mobile devices to communicate and engage with students in consultations, answering queries, as well as using skype, chat, viber and other applications could also be explored. In addition, ways of providing incentives to students to complete pre-workshop activity could be investigated, with the active promotion of the teaching staff as the norm.

Furthermore having greater access to the students' online LMS would assist us in monitoring opportunities to reinforce AIL from communication students receive from their lecturers and tutors. Being able to email all students directly in the LMS or how to utilise the online course site chat function better is being explored through *tālanoa* with lecturers. Developing more ways of assessing the impact and effectiveness of this project in relation to improved student outcomes could also be investigated.

Overall the importance of quality staff-student relationships and robust communications in successful integration of AIL is pivotal. Using the blended model works well when incorporating face-to-face teaching and learning with the technology, but it must also integrate Pacific concepts and approaches. Blended learning removes some of the barriers Pacific learners may encounter as it provides them with not only more flexibility as to where and how they learn, but also anonymous feedback. Culturally and linguistically blended learning also has the potential to improve participation rates and improve the academic outcomes for Pacific students. This initial phase of Stage four of the AIL integration project has shown that embedding culturally and linguistically responsive approaches in the blended learning environment provides a sustainable way of achieving increased effective student engagement in tertiary studies.

## **Glossary:**

*Tālanoa* (Fijian, Tongan and Samoan) - formal and informal dialogue and interactions.

*Teu le vā* (Samoan) or *tauhi vā* (Tongan) – nurturing reciprocal relationships.

*Kakala* - means a garland of fragrant flowers. *Kakala* is a Tongan metaphor for the research framework in education developed by Prof Konai Helu-Thaman 1992 (*toil, tui, luva*), and modified by Taufe'ulungaki & Johansson-Fua 2009, 2014 (*teu, toli, tui, luva*) and Manuatu 2000 (*teu, toil, tui, luva, malie & mafana*). *Kakala* involves the different stages of: *teu* (planning and preparation), *tolu* (gathering and selection), *tui* (construct or writing), *luva* (presentation), *malie* (evaluation and feedback), and *mafana* (sustaining).

*Vaka Moana* - informal student course tutorials facilitated by Pacific staff /course tutors focusing on specific knowledge, understandings and academic support key to students' progress in class for Pacific Studies.

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**Corresponding author:** Judy McFall, [j.mcfall@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:j.mcfall@auckland.ac.nz)

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