

Visiting Academic Professional Development at the University of Auckland, NZ

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The University of Auckland, UoA, is New Zealand's highest-ranked university, and was established in 1883 as a constituent college of the University of New Zealand. It is New Zealand's largest university with a student population of 30,287, including about 29% are international students from over 110 countries. There are over 5,000 full-time equivalent staff who work within a wide range of international diversity. Among them, 43% are academic staff and 57% are professional staff (note: professional staff at UoA means non-academic staff). The UoA is ranked 81st in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings. It received the highest possible rating of Five Stars Plus in the QS Stars University Ratings, with maximum five-star ratings in each of the areas evaluated: teaching, employability, research, internationalization, facilities, innovation, access and discipline rankings and accreditations.

Our purpose of visiting the UoA was to understand their values, strategies, and practices of supporting growth of teaching and academic citizenship. We focused on their policies related with rewarding (assessing) and promoting academic staff, policies and practices to ensure diversity and equity, the roles of HR, and professional development practices. By learning from the UoA, we hope to make our faculty development and TA training more valued in supporting education at Hiroshima University to be internationalization.

We observed the Teaching Catalyst Programme provided by the Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education (CLear) at UoA. CLear provides research-informed institutional leadership in higher education learning and teaching. Their programs and activities aim to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and research at the UoA through the promotion of reflective and innovative practice and a scholarly approach to higher education. We also interviewed two senior members of the faculty of CLear, three senior professional staff (from HR, Academic Quality Office, and Equity Office), and two junior teaching fellows.

The visit was fruitful because we have found some ideas that may apply to the case of Hiroshima University, especially from the Teaching Catalyst Programme we observed. The Teaching Catalyst Programme introduces newly appointed academic staff to teaching at the UoA and is required as part of the continuation process for anyone who is new to teaching at a tertiary level. The program comprises of three full days and three 2-hour seminars. The three days were focused on key concepts and strategies involved in university teaching and learning. It covered teaching large classes, working with small groups, encouraging active learning, diversity in the classroom, effective e-learning, course design and assessment, and getting feedback on the teaching of the participants. We found that this type of faculty development would be not only functional for TAs or those who are going to teach in our university, but could be beneficial for younger faculty across campus. It also could help us build an interactive community for our faculty.



Group activity in the session of Assessment of Teaching Catalyst Programme
(From the right hand: Dr. Dai and Dr. Walter)



An experimental classroom to promote active learning