

WSCUC Interim Report

INSTRUCTIONS

Interim Reports are limited in scope, not comprehensive evaluations of the institution. The report informs the Interim Report Committee about the progress made by the institution in addressing issues identified by the Commission.

The Interim Report consists of two sections:

- Interim Report Form and Appendices

Please respond completely to each question on the following pages and do not delete the questions. Appendices and Additional Required Data will be uploaded as separate attachments.

WSCUC is no longer using Live Text for receiving Interim Reports. Institutions will use a free Box.com account to upload the report. Instructions for creating the Box.com account and uploading the report will be provided by email.

REPORT GUIDELINES AND WORD LIMITS

Because the number of issues reported on varies among institutions (the average is four to six issues), the length of a report will vary. However, **a typical interim report ranges from 20 to 60 pages, not including appendices.** Narrative essays responding to each issue should be no more than five pages each. **The total number of pages of appendices supporting the report should be no more than 200 pages** unless agreed upon in advance with the institution's staff liaison. Be sure that all attachments follow a consistent naming convention and are referenced the same way at appropriate places within the narrative. Please name them so that it is clear what they are and what section they refer to, with cross referencing in the narrative. For example, "Attachment 2-1: Mission Statement", would be used for Criterion 2. Attachments are preferred as PDFs.

Institutions that provide excessive information in their report will be asked to resubmit. You may wish to consult with your staff liaison as you prepare your report.

Some tips for providing evidence to support your findings:

- Put yourself in the place of a reviewer: what is the story that you need to tell? What evidence supports your story? What is extraneous and can be left out?
- Provide a representative sample of evidence on an issue, rather than ALL of the evidence.
- Consider including an executive summary or the most relevant points of supporting evidence, rather than the entire document.
- If you are referring to a specific page or set of pages in a document, include only those pages, not the entire document.
- If you are providing an excerpt of a document, include the title of the document, and a table of contents and/or a brief narrative to put the excerpt in context.
- If you provide a hyperlink to a web page, make sure the link takes the viewer directly to the relevant information on the page. Do not make your reviewer search for it.

REVIEW PROCESS

A panel of the WSCUC Interim Report Committee (IRC) will review the report, typically within 90 days of receipt. Representatives of your institution will be invited to participate in the conference call review to respond to questions from the panel. Your WSCUC staff liaison will contact you after the call with the outcome of the review, which will also be documented in a formal action letter.

OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW

After the review, the panel will take one of the following actions.

- **Receive the Interim Report** with recommendations and commendations—No follow up required.
- **Defer action** pending receipt of follow-up information—The panel has identified limited information that may be submitted in a short period of time, such as audited financial statements or the outcome of an upcoming meeting of the board. The panel may authorize the WSCUC staff liaison to review these materials without the full panel being brought together again, depending on the nature of the supplemental information.
- **Request an additional Interim Report**—Issues reported on were not adequately resolved or need continued monitoring.
- **Request a Progress Report**—A progress report is less formal than an Interim Report and is reviewed only by the WSCUC staff liaison. A progress report may be requested when institutional follow-up on one or two relatively minor areas is desired.
- **Receive the Interim Report with a recommendation that the Commission sends a site visit evaluation team**—Serious, ongoing issues involving potential non-compliance with WSCUC's Standards and Criteria for Review may require follow-up in the form of a Special Visit. Note that the IRC panel makes a recommendation for a visit, and the Executive Committee of the Commission or the full Commission decides on whether or not to require the visit.

Interim Report Form

Please respond to each question. Do not delete the questions. Insert additional pages as needed.

Name of Institution:

Person Submitting the Report:

Report Submission Date:

Statement on Report Preparation

Briefly describe in narrative form the process of report preparation, providing the names and titles of those involved. Because of the focused nature of an Interim Report, the widespread and comprehensive involvement of all institutional constituencies is not normally required. Faculty, administrative staff, and others should be involved as appropriate to the topics being addressed in the preparation of the report. Campus constituencies, such as faculty leadership and, where appropriate, the governing board, should review the report before it is submitted to WSCUC, and such reviews should be indicated in this statement.

Response:

The Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President (Education) had a lead role in preparing this report together with the key personnel mentioned in the table below.

Names and Titles of those involved

Name	Position	Section
Professor Jito Vanualailai	Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education)	Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education)
Dr Giulio Pāunga	Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Regional Campuses and Global Engagement)	Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Regional Campuses and Global Engagement)
Dr Matthew Hayward	Director Education	Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education)
Mr Totivi Bokini-Ratu	Secretary to Council and Manager Council and Senate Secretariat	Council and Senate Secretariat (CSS)
Mr Fereti Atalifo	Acting Director- ITS	Information Technology Services (ITS)
Ms Shaiza Janif	Research Skills Development Coordinator	Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President (Education)
Ms Priya Devi	Accreditation Project Officer	Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President (Education)

The following processes were carried out to prepare this report:

- i. The [Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 \(SAV1\) Institutional Report 2018](#), [Report of the WSCUC Visiting Team](#) and [July 2018 Commission Action Letter](#) were reviewed side by side with the Interim Report requirements;
- ii. Relevant Key sections and key personnel were identified within the University and contacted for their respective inputs on matters covered in this interim report;
- iii. The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education) worked closely with the relevant sections and personnel in compiling a draft version of this report;
- iv. The draft was then revised and endorsed for submission by Director Education, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education) and final approval by the Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Pal Ahluwalia.

List of Topics Addressed in this Report

Please list the topics identified in the action letter(s) and that are addressed in this report.

As identified in the [July 2018 Commission Action Letter](#) this report focusses on the following four topics:

- a. How the several upcoming leadership changes were addressed (e.g. President, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Vice-President);
- b. Improvements in internet connectivity from 2018 to July 2022;
- c. The possible expansion of new campuses;
- d. Development of post-graduate outcomes and demonstration of significant improvement in assessment practices across all programmes.

In addition to this, the report briefly discusses how The University of the South Pacific has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Institutional Context

Very briefly describe the institution's background; mission; history, including the founding date and year first accredited; geographic locations; and other pertinent information so that the Interim Report Committee panel has the context to understand the issues discussed in the report.

Established in 1968, enacted by a Royal Charter granted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1970, The University of the South Pacific (USP) is the premier institution of higher learning in the Pacific, uniquely placed in a region of extraordinary physical, social and economic diversity and challenges to serve the region's need for high quality tertiary education, research and policy. Apart from being a tertiary institution, it also serves as an organisation of regional cooperation and integration. The University is jointly owned and governed by twelve (12) Member Countries: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. With its 14 campuses and 10 centres located across its 12 member countries, the region of the University spreads across 33 million square kilometres of oceans, with the total population of its member countries around 2.4 million.

The main campus is the Laucala campus, located in Suva, Fiji, which constitutes 56% of the student enrolments (p. 21, [USP 2021 Annual Report](#)). There are two campuses outside Suva offering 50% or more of a degree programme: the Samoa Campus (formerly known as the Alafua Campus) in Apia, Samoa, and the Emalus Campus in Vanuatu. The central administration of the university is located at the Laucala Campus, with the University's Vice-Chancellor and President based at the Samoa Campus since 2021.

USP is comprised of eight academic units, which are six Schools and two interdisciplinary Colleges/Centres: the Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) and the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD). Each School accommodates various disciplines, which offer a wide range of academic programmes at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Pacific TAFE provides pre-degree and skills-based programmes and study pathways. PaCE-SD provides environmental education programmes, research and community engagement opportunities in the Pacific Island Region. The [2023 University Prospectus](#) provides up-to-date information about the University and its academic programmes.

The ceremonial head of the University is the Chancellor. USP's Chancellors are Heads of State or Heads of Government of member countries. The University is governed by its own [Council](#), chaired by the Pro-Chancellor, and comprised of the Vice-Chancellor and President (VC&P), representatives of the twelve member countries, Australia and New Zealand representatives, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Secretary General, USP Senate representatives, staff and student representatives and co-opted members. The executive head of the University is the Vice-Chancellor and President and is accountable to the University Council. The University Senior Management Team (SMT) is an advisory committee that makes recommendations to the VC&P in relation to University management and operations. The SMT comprises the VC&P, the three Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs), the six Heads of Schools, the Executive Director People and Workforce Strategy, the Executive Director Finance and the Chief Operating Officer.

The University's vision is "To shape Pacific futures by empowering students, staff and alumni to become inspirational agents of positive change leading to innovative, cohesive, resilient and sustainable communities". The University aligns to its vision through its mission: "To influence Pacific Islanders through the pursuit of excellence in knowledge by providing world-class education and research that improves the lives of individuals and communities". The University's vision and mission are guided by its Pacific values of inclusive family, participatory and open dialogue. The [university's mission, vision and values](#) inform its Strategic Plan (SP), with the [current SP](#) operational from 2022 to 2024.

WSCUC Accreditation History at USP

USP received a diagnostic visit in October 2014 and was then invited to apply for eligibility in December 2014. An application for eligibility was submitted in June 2015, and in November 2015, the Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) granted eligibility for five years through November 24, 2020. The Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 (SAV1) was conducted in April 2018, following which the University was granted its initial accreditation status for a period of six years.

Response to Issues Identified by the Commission

This main section of the report should address the issues identified by the Commission in its action letter(s) as topics for the Interim Report. Each topic identified in the Commission's action letter should be addressed. The team report (on which the action letter is based) may provide additional context and background for the institution's understanding of issues.

Provide a full description of each issue, the actions taken by the institution that address this issue, and an analysis of the effectiveness of these actions to date. Have the actions taken been successful in resolving the problem? What is the evidence supporting progress? What further problems or issues remain? How will these concerns be addressed, by whom, and under what timetable? How will the institution know when the issue has been fully addressed? Please include a timeline that outlines planned additional steps with milestones and expected outcomes. Responses should be no longer than five pages per issue

Issue 1: Several upcoming leadership changes (e.g., president, deputy vice chancellor, and vice president)

Description of the issue:

The Vice-Chancellor and President (VC&P) is the Chief Executive Officer for the University who has overall authority and responsibility for the direction of the University, and is accountable to the University Council. The VC&P is appointed by the Council under the Statutes of The University of the South Pacific (please see attachment 1.1: Extract of the Statutes of The University of the South Pacific) . The term of the VC&Ps appointment is for five years, and the contract may be renewed by Council for a further five-year term. In 2018, when USP hosted the Seeking Accreditation Visit, USP's Vice-Chancellor and President (VC&P) then Prof. Rajesh Chandra was about to complete his second five-year term at the end of 2018. Also in the period of initial accreditation, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)—then Professor Richard Coll—was due to retire in January 2020. Hence, addressing these major leadership changes was of significance to the University.

Actions taken by the institution to address this issue:

Vice-Chancellor & President Position:

The USP Council at its 84th Meeting (May 2017) approved the advertisement for a successor. The Post of Vice-Chancellor & President was advertised internationally in June and applications closed on 25th September 2017. The Joint Committee of the Council and Senate on the recruitment of the VCP position were not satisfied with the applications received, thus in October 2017 Council approved the extension of the recruitment period for another round of rigorous advertising and an international Executive search. Desirable candidate applications were received following the international search activity and second advertising campaign from Dec 2018 to March 2019. Four candidates were recommended to proceed to Interview.

The Joint Committee undertook a robust interview process and unanimously recommended that Prof. Pal Ahluwalia be appointed as the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP. Prof. Ahluwalia had been Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) at the University of Portsmouth in the United Kingdom, where he also held the role of Senior Quality and Diversity Champion. Prior to this he was Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) at the University of Portsmouth, and Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of South Australia. The Council at its 86th Council Meeting (May 2018) unanimously resolved to approve the recommendation that Prof. Ahluwalia be appointed as VCP for a term of 5 years.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) position:

Upon Prof. Richard Coll's retirement in January 2020, the VCP appointed Prof. Jito Vanualailai (former Director Research) as Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) position, pending substantial appointment (Attachment 1.2: Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education email). This acting appointment was made in line with the Statutes of The University of the South Pacific (refer attachment 1.1). In November 2021, the Council approved at its 92nd Meeting an extension to the appointment of Prof. Jito

Vanualailai as Acting DVCE, pending the convening of the Joint Committee responsible for the recruitment of the DVC.

In this same Council meeting, all the Deputy Vice-Chancellor position titles at the University were retitled to Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (attachment 1.3: 92nd Council Meeting Decisions), to better reflect the responsibilities of the roles.

The Joint Committee of the Council and Senate for the appointment of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President was duly constituted following the November 2021 Council Meeting. The Joint Committee received twenty-two applications during the recruitment window between 28 February and 2 April 2022, and agreed to shortlist the two candidates who met minimum qualifications requirements and based on their respective academic accomplishments. Of the two candidates, Prof. Vanualailai performed exceptionally well and was recommended to the Council to be appointed. This recruitment was conducted in accordance with the USP Handbook for Appointments Made by Council (refer to attachment 1.4: Extract Minutes of the 93rd USP Council Meeting and attachment 1.5: DVCE Appointment email).

Analysis on the effectiveness of these actions:

The new Vice-Chancellor and President, Prof. Pal Ahluwalia was officially appointed in a timely manner (attachment 1.6: New VCP Appointment email). The incoming VCP joined USP formally in 2018 as the VC&P Designate. This was intended to ensure a smooth transition and handover from USP's outgoing VC&P, and to give the incoming VC&P a working knowledge of USP operations and policies and an opportunity to meet and work with University staff prior to officially starting in January 2019.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice President (Education) position was temporarily filled with an acting appointment as per the Statutes of the University, providing stability through the disruptions brought by COVID-19. This strategy ensured that the core learning and teaching business of the University remained unaffected until a substantive appointment was made. Prof. Jito Vanualailai was appointed as substantive Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice President (Education) on May 20th, 2022.

Have the actions taken been successful in resolving the problem? What is the evidence supporting progress?

Yes: both the positions, VC&P and DVC&VP-E, have been filled (attachments 1.1 to 1.6).

The team report also highlighted the vacancies in the Pro-Vice-Chancellor position. As noted in the USP SAV1 2018 report, the Regional Campuses were meant to be headed by either a Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) for larger campuses (i.e. Samoa, Emalus and Solomon Islands), or a Campus Director for smaller campuses. Responding to prolonged challenges in recruiting suitable candidates, and following thorough consultation within the University, the Executive Committee recommended that the PVC Model be revised to recruit Campus Directors for all campuses regardless of size (Attachment 1.7: Recruitment of PVCs). Following this recommendation, the appointment and recruitment of all Campus Directors have been made as per USP policies and procedures, and all Campus Director positions are now filled.

What further problems or issues remain?

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Research and Innovation) [DVCRI] position had been vacant since January 2021, when the incumbent DVCRI's contract term came to an end. The DVCRI recruitment process commenced after the May 2022 Council meeting, with the VCP handling the DVCRI portfolio in the interim.

The recruitment and appointment of this position was carried out as per the Statutes of the University. At its 94th Meeting on 10th and 11th of November 2022, the USP Council appointed Professor Jankowski as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Research and Innovation). The University is currently awaiting his work permit.

How will these concerns be addressed, by whom, and under what timetable? How will the institution know when the issue has been fully addressed? Please include a timeline that outlines planned additional steps with milestones and expected outcomes.

Issue 2: Improvements in internet connectivity

Description of the issue

The University operates one of the most complex ICT environments, providing connectivity with its 12 member countries through satellite (USPNet) and fibre optic connectivity. The availability of reliable and affordable high-speed internet access (connectivity) at all USP campuses has been a significant challenge to the University. It was noted during the WSCUC Site visit and prior that students and staff shared a need for more consistent and reliable internet to support learning and student success.

Actions taken by the institution to address this issue

The University of the South Pacific has made considerable investments in Information Communications Technology infrastructure, software and service licensing to improve USP Learning, Teaching & Research delivery as well as to enhance the institutional administration functions.

The investments below highlight the key discrete pieces of technology purchased or engaged by USP from 2018 to date. It is necessary to state these in full, as they form the basis for the overlay of services to staff and students that will be detailed below.

1. Investment in on-premise HCI Server Systems Infrastructure within the USP Data Centre to facilitate high capacity and performance infrastructure to host USP's next generation of learning, teaching and administration services – this is the underlying infrastructure platform that hosts the core intelligence components of most of the systems below.
2. Investment in Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) technology – augmentation of VDI infrastructure, services and endpoint devices to allow for better cost efficiencies in desktop deployments for (mainly) student users. A specific application that was developed from this was the extension of specific software services (v-Apps) to remote students.
3. Investment in Zoom Online Conferencing platform as the key synchronous online platform for Learning & Teaching delivery. This included both Zoom Licensing (currently at 70 licenses brokered through AARNET facilitating 600+ sessions a day) and the hosting HCI server systems infrastructure.
4. Investment in CISCO Webex Unified Communications platform to serve as the telephone system technology replacement, heralding new messaging and video communications capability – with the flexibility of delivering this over IP Handsets or indeed any SMART Mobile device. Additionally this investment facilitates Call Centre platforms that field student and staff queries via telephones and messaging – providing the all-important interface to Student Administration Services (SAS) and other administrative and academic areas.
5. Investment in Microsoft 365 Product Suite as part of USP's MS Campus Licensing, heralding the new age of Cloud Software Services mitigating on-premise resiliency and redundancy risks and also further improving the array of online communication and collaboration tools available to the staff and student user community.
6. Investment in Proctorio Online Proctoring Software for the facilitation of Online Examinations to supplement current Learning & Teaching delivery.
7. Investment in Wowza Streaming technology to enhance live delivery and streaming of teaching sessions.

8. Investment in Satellite Infrastructure Systems as part of the NZMFAT-funded USNet Infrastructure Upgrade Project, upgrading the end-of-life Regional Satellite Infrastructure connecting remote regional campuses – to ensure the business continuity and resilience in connectivity for regional campuses. This involved:
 - The construction of a new 7.6m satellite hub antenna in Laucala Campus.
 - The replacement of satellite antennae in remote regional campuses.
 - The installation of a new satellite hub platform (iDirect) – completed
 - The refresh of network and systems layer equipment for regional campuses.
 - Augmenting the regional deployment of communications and collaboration services like MS365 and CISCO Webex to provide the next generation of user services.
9. Investment in third-party Telecommunications and Internet Service Provider (ISP) Services to enhance accessibility to USP online resources and services by lowering the cost barriers for staff and students. These services included:
 - The negotiation for zero-rating of Internet traffic over ISP networks destined for USP Online Resources like the Moodle Learning Management and Zoom Conferencing systems – effectively rendering access to USP resources free in terms of data charges for USP students.
 - The procurement of a Toll-Free Short Code Number from telcos and regulatory authorities to allow students to dial into USP Call Centres for academic advice and guidance as well as to raise general queries on IT Services and other general USP administration matters.

Analysis on the effectiveness of these actions:

The above investments in the critical technology pieces have subsequently facilitated the following enhancements to the portfolio of USP's learning and teaching services:

- 1. Diversifying the scope of synchronous communication tools for teacher-student and peer-peer interactions across the region:**
 - Zoom licenses were purchased to be utilised across the USP campuses for teaching and learning. This allowed USP Learning & Teaching activities to be transitioned to online delivery once COVID-travel restrictions were enforced – effectively allowing for USP to continue to deliver its courses to a staff and student population largely working from home.
 - Webex by Cisco is a communications platform that was initially deployed as a telephone system replacement, with collaboration and communication capabilities to add to staff interaction. With the initial proof of concept deployment demonstrated in Fiji campuses, regional deployment is currently underway.
 - BigBlueButton is an integral part of the institutional LMS Moodle, used for selected courses.
 - The MS365 suite of tools have been deployed to the full USP staff user base – with MS Teams being trialled for smaller student engagement, such as academic counselling and learning support with individuals or smaller student groups.
- 2. Expanding capacity to enable remote access to software for courses:**
 - Investment in a Video Desktop Infrastructure (VDI), also known as V-Apps: recently piloted with selected School of Information Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Physics disciplines, where it was especially needed to ensure continuity and meet accreditation requirements during the campus closures brought with COVID-19.
- 3. Strengthening online presence for Face-to-Face courses:**
 - All course assignment submissions are now online university wide.
 - Over 90% of face-to-face courses in the University are E-ready.

4. **Initiating a booking system for virtual classes – the Integrated Conferencing Assistant (ICA):**
 - ITS has created the Integrated Conferencing Assistant (ICA) platform to provide automated integration between USP-hosted online systems like Moodle, Banner, MS Email and Outlook Calendar and external vendor-provisioned systems like Zoom to offer users a single portal for the booking of their conferencing services.
5. **Explore an alternative option to conduct exams online:**
 - Proctorio licenses were purchased as part of a pilot programme and to maintain meeting external accreditation requirements.
6. **Build teacher and student capacity to use the introduced learning technologies:**
 - a. CFL and ITS have rolled out workshops concerning the introduced learning and teaching technologies.

At the same time, the investments in technology also served to provide key ICT tools for the critical supplementary institutional administrative functions around core learning, teaching and research activities. These services were key to allowing USP to function in the new COVID-constrained environment:

- a) **CISCO Webex Unified Communications as the key platform for USP Call Centres** – providing the key virtual platform during COVID lockdown that allowed key sections like Student Academic Services (SAS) and IT Services to function from home and still serve the institutional support function for students and staff;
- b) **Data Repository & Dashboard Reports** – an innovative and critical development involved the creation of a special platform for the consolidation of data from the various institutional sources and technology platforms (e.g. Moodle) to draw analytics around the engagement of the above technologies and their influence on student behaviour; the measurement of interaction with student learning systems; and the general nature of queries lodged via Student Call Centres. This platform allowed for an enhanced sensitivity to student engagement with learning systems and institutional processes at a time when visibility and accessibility was at an unprecedented low due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Have the actions taken been successful in resolving the problem? What is the evidence supporting progress?

Yes, for the following reasons:

1. Having a range of web-conferencing tools has allowed the University to enhance interactions and engagement between teacher-student and student-student. Zoom is the main tool used to facilitate synchronous interactions. All USP courses have access to Zoom or BigBlueButton.
2. The Video Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) system had been purchased prior to COVID-19 pandemic and it recently played an important role during the lockdowns enabling students to access special software remotely. This was in the case of 3 Engineering courses that need to ensure it satisfies its international accreditation requirements.

3. Having online presence for over 90% of Face-to-Face courses at USP maintained functionality during the COVID-19 pandemic. All Face-to-Face courses had to rigorously adjust to meeting an E-Readiness checklist that was circulated to all Schools.
4. The Integrated Conferencing Assistant (ICA) system has improved efficiency and convenience for lecturers to book Zoom sessions and to have recorded videos available on Moodle.
5. The introduction of Proctorio has demonstrated the university has the capacity to offer an alternative to attendance-based examinations. It offers opportunities for students to sit exams remotely if they have good internet.
6. Investing in Webex Call Centre infrastructure and services allowed USP to effectively transition its workforce into a virtual environment, and allowed for normal support and administrative functions while working from home during the pandemic.
7. Consolidating disparate data into a new analytical platform provide USP with:
 - business intelligence information to make key strategic decisions on initiatives to combat the current situation – e.g., marketing, student outreach, etc.
 - student engagement analytics – to enhance student performance through proactive intervention and support.

This presents qualitative information reporting the efficacy of the solutions deployed. Empirical values may be obtained from the following sources if required:

- Procurement documentation regarding technology acquisition;
- Technical Installation and Commissioning Reports – detailing the technology specifics as deployed into USP;
- System Logs and Reports regarding usage of ICT platforms – information which may take time to consolidate into meaningful reporting information;
- User Surveys to gauge take up and effectiveness of solutions deployed.

What further problems or issues remain?

1. **Internet Connectivity from Homes:** for USP regional countries with fledgling service providers, internet coverage in areas of student and staff population varies greatly. Consequently, their ability to access USP online resources in certain areas may be difficult and/or cost-prohibitive.

The following strategies are being approached to address this:

- Continuation of the deployment of USP Outreach Commons in all USP regional countries both as a disaster resiliency strategy as well as a community outreach obligation to disadvantaged communities in providing access to higher education services in remote areas.
- Continuation of the ISP / Telco engagement strategy to investigate opportunities to lower costs of accessing online resources for students, e.g. Student Internet Packages.

- 2. Access to User Devices:** the work and study from home model depends upon the availability and affordability of user devices like laptops, smartphones, tablets, etc. Availability and affordability vary across the region, with relatively high costs in remote regional countries of the Pacific. While in time, the affordability should improve, regional countries will always be challenged due to their isolation from the main hubs of commerce.

While this issue is not always within USP's capability to resolve entirely, the following mitigating strategies are currently underway:

- Continuation of the deployment of VDI technology – in offering a centrally held desktop and centrally managed software through VDI, the complexity (and thus cost) of the end user device required is reduced significantly.
- Continuation of Outreach Commons Strategy as outlined above.
- Managing the availability and range of End User Devices on campus – continuation of the PC/Laptop/Tablet investment plans; ensuring that student: device ratios are maintained.
- Laptop Assistance Schemes: USP gave \$200 FJD to its full time Fiji based students to help them purchase Laptops from the USP Bookcentre. This scheme was launched in conjunction with the Tertiary Scholarship and Loans Services (TSLS, Fiji) and USP.

- 3. Server Systems for Hosting Resources and Infrastructure (On-Premise & Cloud):** with the increasing prevalence of ICT tools and services hosted in the Cloud, USP has had to engage Cloud Services while still maintaining its on premise infrastructure. The balance of Cloud/On-Premise will become critical in future years, and while this is largely determined by industry developments, pricing, and packaging, USP's ability to design and acquire online resources in the most cost-efficient manner to support the ever-growing need for Online resources is key.

Server space is a major issue with regards to storage, which impacts upgrades for Moodle and Mahara and integration/sustaining applications-such as Perusall or BigBlueButton, that can enhance learning and teaching in the region.

To address this challenge, the following strategies are currently underway:

- Continuation of the deployment of HCI technology – in offering the highest density augmentation of on premise infrastructure, the procurement of HCI infrastructure to facilitate growth in online services will be critical.
- Engaging Cloud Services as and where Cost-Feasible & Technically Viable – a close evaluation of cloud resource requirement in relation to network architecture.
- Developing User Guidelines and Policy based on ICT Online Resourcing – ensuring that the development and utilization of online tools are commensurate with infrastructure resources.

- 4. Cyber Security:** with the ever-changing landscape of ICT tools and technologies, the ability to protect USP enterprise systems to the threat of cyber-attacks will always be a challenging one. At the present the need for a Cloud-based solution to mitigate against threats to USP's

increasing cloud presence is critical. There are currently solutions before USP SMT and Finance for consideration.

How will these concerns be addressed, by whom, and under what timetable? How will the institution know when the issue has been fully addressed? Please include a timeline that outlines planned additional steps with milestones and expected outcomes.

While the strategies for addressing the issues raised are listed above, the implementation of these initiatives has involved all stakeholders (including Senior Management Team, ITS, Centre for Flexible Learning, Library, Schools and Student representative bodies) to ensure successful deployment.

The key responsibility areas are as follows:

- **Centre for Flexible Learning (CFL)** – evaluation, design and adoption of new learning, teaching and research tools for USP, and the instruction in their effective usage and integration with institutional requirements.
- **Information Technology Services (ITS)** – design, acquisition and deployment of ICT infrastructure and services to support USP learning, teaching and research activities as well as administrative support functions.
- **Senior Management Team (SMT)** – strategic evaluation and alignment of technology acquisition proposals and with their endorsement, the provisioning of funding for technology deployment in relevant areas.
- **Other Support Sections and Schools:** feedback and input into the technology design process as well as implementation to ensure successful implementation.

The timetable maps to the [Strategic Plan 2022–24](#), particularly PA5: Objective 2 (p. 31).

Issue 3: The possible expansion of new campuses

Description of the issue:

There has been an identified need for greater infrastructure resources from USP regional students and staff. This also includes more study spaces for students. Hence, the construction of the new Solomon Islands Campus will support the University of the South Pacific (USP) in expanding access to higher education in 12 Pacific Island countries by improving regional campus facilities and enhancing information and communication technology (ICT)-based learning programs. Higher education opportunities in the Pacific remain limited, and the lack of adequate opportunities for higher education restricts the growth of a qualified workforce capable of supporting the development of diversified economies. Improved access to quality higher education at USP will contribute to human resource and skills development in the Pacific, and promote inclusive growth through higher productivity and diversification of the region's economy

Actions taken by the institution to address this issue:

The procurement process for the new Solomon Islands Campus ran in 2018-2019, where revised bidding documents and the tender rebidding process was completed.

The project was delayed in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, from the initial contracted start date of 28th January 2020 to May 2020, then to 31st August 2020, then to 30th January 2021, and finally to 30th April 2021, when the project commenced civil works. The construction period of 707 days (approximately 24 months) commenced on 30th April 2021, with the planned completion date of 7th April 2023. Progress has been encouraging with the increase in the number of personnel on site since the lows experienced due to the lockdowns in the Solomon Islands earlier this year; in June 2022, progress was approximately 35%, this increased to 60% by October, and is projected to be at 80% by December 2022. An extension of time request (EOT) of 30 days was received from the contractor for the delays due to the civil unrest in December 2021. The request has been approved by the University and endorsement by the ADB. Hence the new construction completion date is 7th May 2023.

Analysis on the effectiveness of these actions:

The construction is still underway, with the new Solomon Islands Campus expected to:

- Accommodate the growing number of SI students, especially those from remote areas;
- Support students with ICT equipment, strengthening learning through face-to-face, distance and flexible learning (DFL), or blended methods;
- Provide student support centres to offer extensive pre-enrolment information, employment advice, and counselling services. Pre-enrolment services will support recruitment and marketing activities to ensure that all prospective students receive accurate and comprehensive information about their programme choice and the level of commitment expected of them. Employment advisory offices will be established in the Solomon Islands Campus. The offices will provide career counselling services, including (a) skills assessments and generation of work options; (b) job search techniques, e.g., interviewing, CV writing; and (c) job placement services to link students to available job opportunities and a USP alumni database.

- The new campus will house the Public Health programme. Pacific Island students will now be able to access higher education in Public Health, especially for women and students from remote outer islands

Have the actions taken been successful in resolving the problem? What is the evidence supporting progress?

Yes, the planned construction is in progress as per the above.

What further problems or issues remain?

While the campus construction is ongoing, risks of delay are still posed by COVID-19 legacies, including the precarious global economic situation, and possible impacts on the flow of goods and services across the region. These precarities may affect the construction programme, the project implementation unit have to now managed all delays as per the above.

How will these concerns be addressed, by whom, and under what timetable? How will the institution know when the issue has been fully addressed? Please include a timeline that outlines planned additional steps with milestones and expected outcomes.

The consultant updates the project risk register weekly and provides feedback to the PIU, which is chaired by DVC&VP (RC&GE) and also consists of the Project Team. This register highlights potential risks and the control measures in place to mitigate these risks. Only when the campus is complete will these risks be nullified.

Issue 4: Development of post-graduate outcomes and demonstration of significant improvement in assessment practices across all programmes.

Description of the issue:

While USP had established University Graduate Outcomes and Programme Graduate Outcomes for undergraduate programmes at the point of WSCUC Initial Accreditation, the University had not yet established University Postgraduate Outcomes, or reviewed Programme Postgraduate Outcomes across all programmes. The University did recognise the urgency of this activity, and assigned responsibility for establishing University Postgraduate Outcomes to the Director Research, who was at that time Prof. Jito Vanualailai, now Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education).

As noted by the SAV1 Team report, ‘the lack of postgraduate outcomes prevented the institution from claiming with confidence that students have achieved expected levels of attainment (CFR 2.2b). Additionally, conversations with students at the postgraduate level during the team visit indicated that the rigor could be improved, especially as it relates to support for high-quality research. A review of syllabi indicated significant reliance on quizzes, tests, and labs, with fewer examples of sophisticated or increasingly complex assignments across course levels. While discussions with academic staff indicated the existence of capstones or eportfolios, their utilization for advanced measures of learning were unclear’.

Actions taken by the institution to address this issue:

In 2018, the University established the PG Mapping Working Group, chaired by the Director Research, coordinated the development of University Postgraduate Outcomes (UPOs) in collaboration with the schools, PaCE-SD, and the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education). The resulting University Postgraduate Outcomes and Descriptors were approved by the University Senate in September 2018 (attachment 4.1: Learning Outcomes Descriptors for Postgraduate Programmes).

In 2020, the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) took on the responsibility for embedding University Postgraduate Outcomes within all taught postgraduate programmes (Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma, and Masters by Coursework), for reviewing and establishing the Programme Postgraduate Outcomes (PPOs) for every taught postgraduate programme, and for coordinating constructive alignment between the UPOs, PPOs, Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) and Assessment for all courses within these programmes. The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) meanwhile oversaw the process for all research postgraduate programmes (Masters by Research and PhD), and the two offices collaborated on the taught Masters programmes with a research component (SRP). Consultation with the Schools began in 2020, and the project has been continued on behalf of the DVCE as the Postgraduate Outcome Implementation and Alignment Project, 2020–22, overseen by Dr Matthew Hayward as Director Education. (See Attachment 4 for the Postgraduate Implementation Plan, which provides detail on the project objectives, activities and timelines.)

As of October 2022, all postgraduate programmes include Senate-approved Programme Postgraduate Outcomes, aligned to the University Postgraduate Outcomes, the Course Learning Outcomes, and the assessments for all courses. Nineteen (19) programmes were approved in Senate 1 meeting of 2022 (refer to attachment 4.3: Extract of ACP1_22 Minutes), twenty-four (24) were approved in Senate 2 meeting of 2022 (attachment 4.4: Extract of Senate2_22 Minutes), and twenty-one (21) were approved

by Senate 3 of 2022 in October 2022 (refer attachment 4.5: PPO and UPO Submission to S3_22, pending Senate 3_22 Minutes).

With the Postgraduate Outcome Implementation and Alignment Project completed, the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education) is developing a curriculum review cycle for all programmes, to ensure that all assessment activities are appropriate to the level of each course, integrating Models of Engaged Learning and Teaching (MELT) to underwrite progression in levels of student autonomy between levels. This cycle is intended for implementation as part of the Academic Prioritisation of Programmes exercise, also led by the Office of the DVCE. Please refer attachment 4.6: Academic Programme Prioritisation Policy and attachment 4.7: Extract of Senate 2 of 2022 Minutes.

Analysis on the effectiveness of these actions:

The projects described above have led to the successful development of University Postgraduate Outcomes, Programme Postgraduate Outcomes for all programmes, and the constructive alignment among these and the Course Learning Outcomes and Assessments.

Have the actions taken been successful in resolving the problem? What is the evidence supporting progress?

Yes, they have been successful. The establishment of postgraduate outcomes allows the University to claim with confidence that students have achieved expected levels of attainment (CFR 2.2b).

What further problems or issues remain?

The establishment of a cyclical review for assessment is still underway and pending Senate approval for implementation.

How will these concerns be addressed, by whom, and under what timetable? How will the institution know when the issue has been fully addressed? Please include a timeline that outlines planned additional steps with milestones and expected outcomes.

The curriculum review cycle for all programmes will be implemented by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education), as part of the Academic Prioritisation of Programmes exercise, also led by the Office of the DVC&VP-E. As informed by the USP Strategic Plan 2022-2024, the initiatives would include: evaluating the assessment component for all learning outcomes at course and programme levels, to ensure learning outcomes are measured appropriately. Refer to attachment 4.8: Extract notes of Curriculum Review and Development (CRD) Workshop 2.

Identification of Other Changes and Issues Currently Facing the Institution

Instructions: This brief section should identify any other significant changes that have occurred or issues that have arisen at the institution (e.g., changes in key personnel, addition of major new programs, modifications in the governance structure, unanticipated challenges, or significant financial results) that are not otherwise described in the preceding section. This information will help the Interim Report Committee panel gain a clearer sense of the current status of the institution and understand the context in which the actions of the institution discussed in the previous section have taken place.

Issue 5: How USP addressed COVID-19 imposed challenges

Description of the issue:

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide. The lockdowns, physical distancing requirements, travel restrictions within the region, new national laws and regulations on Higher Education: all presented unanticipated challenges to the University. Implementing responsive changes while ensuring continuity in the University's learning and teaching core business and student success were the main priorities.

Actions taken by the institution to address this issue and its effectiveness:

When COVID-19 cases were first detected in Fiji in March 2020, the USP Disaster Management Committee met and coordinated the immediate response actions to be taken for the University, especially for Fiji campuses, which were affected by nationally imposed lockdowns. Regular meetings were established between the VCP and USP Disaster Management Committee, with input from the following stakeholders:

- Regional Country Embassy Representatives based in Suva, Fiji: to reassure and present the various COVID-19 support actions taken by Laucala and Lautoka campuses for residential and non-residential regional students, as well as to discuss repatriation arrangements for students whose governments had given notification that this was to be done;
- Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC): to brief the FHEC of the COVID-19 protection actions taken by USP Fiji campuses for their staff and students. This forum also served to establish with FHEC officials COVID-19 guidance documents for Fiji tertiary institutions;
- Staff and Student Talanoa Forums: discussions around COVID-19 were scheduled to discuss impacts to learning and teaching schedules, examinations and graduations and to reassure students and staff of the support available in these unprecedented times;
- USP also joined the CROP (Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific) agencies' COVID-19 group headed by Forum Secretariat, with technical input by SPC (The Pacific Community) Public Health Team. To this effect, weekly meetings were held from February to April 2020 to monitor the evolving COVID-19 situation and implement joint actions particularly for their staff regarding international travel, COVID-19 mitigation actions and information sharing.

An overarching **USP Pandemic Management Plan** (See attachment 5.1: USP Pandemic Management Plan) was developed to anticipate and respond to the phases of the COVID-19 pandemic impacts to University operations and campuses, and circulated widely among USP's stakeholders in March 2020. This provided a guideline for USP Disaster Management Committee members and senior managers, including Campus Directors to enhance management of their operations in line with the evolving COVID-19 situation in their locations and countries.

To operationalise the implementation of the plan in various areas and services of the University, particularly the Headquarters at Laucala campus, cluster groupings of services sharing similar functions were organised to achieve their shared objectives. (Refer to attachment 5.2: COVID-19 Management Clusters.)

The immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was the lockdown of the three Fiji campuses (Laucala in Suva, Lautoka, and Labasa) from 19 March to 19 April 2020. This was due to the Fiji Government lockdown of Lautoka City and Suva City when COVID-19 cases were found in these areas. The USP campuses were placed into extended mid-semester break to absorb the impact posed by these closures. Following the lifting of the Suva lockdown by the Fiji Government, all campuses were re-opened on 20 April 2020, with COVID-19 restrictions such as social distancing, regular handwashing and body temperature monitoring in place.

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, USP swiftly switched to remote learning, drawing upon its 30+ years of experience in delivering quality learning materials for flexible learning and teaching to guarantee education continuity in both semesters.

The Office of the DVC&VP (Education) begun the year by establishing a Learning and Teaching Continuity Team. It is tasked with closely monitoring student participation and engagement via Moodle.

In Semester 1, a small percentage of students who recorded inactive were contacted by the University's Call Centre team. The challenges faced by them, attributed to lack of steady internet connectivity, personal computers/laptops, and/or financial limitations were noted. The University acted swiftly on the feedback to mitigate against the aforementioned challenges and improved the learning environment by providing tablets, establishing computer hubs off-campus, and engaging with internet service providers to provide free data plans for USP students.

Listed below are some of the additional initiatives undertaken by the University to assist students and staff with online learning and teaching to ensure student engagement and participation:

- The University was flexible with assessment due dates as internet connectivity and access to equipment such as laptops and PCs are ongoing challenges;
 - The deadline for the payment of fees was extended to the end of the year 2020;
 - A USP Call Centre was established to engage students more closely, reaching out to those who were not satisfactorily progressing academically, capturing challenges and providing immediate solutions. This helped minimise student withdrawals;
 - While the University made available 700 tablets for loan to all students, faculty implemented initiatives such as offering audio-friendly learnings packs for students facing internet accessibility issues, and engaging students using social media platform;

- A toll-free number was made available to allow Fiji students to call USP for administrative support and academic assistance;
- Students were able to access USP internet sites and Moodle for free in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa due to USP's partnership internet carriers such as Vodafone and Digicel, the two prominent internet companies in the Pacific islands. Moodle is USP's main online Learning Management System.
- Two Outreach Commons were established in the Suva peripheral areas with high population densities to provide students access to steady internet connectivity and PCs. This was in response to data from the Call Centre showing that students living in the corridors of the two highly populated areas faced logistical and IT challenges.
- The USP offered bursary awards to 335 needy students with good grades during Semester 2, 2020.

With the massive increase in community transmissions in Fiji since April (2021), Management made swift changes to the University's teaching plans for the 2021 academic year, ensuring robust plans were in place for all possible scenarios, including partial closure and full lockdown. Attachment 5.3: Learning and Teaching (L&T) Continuity Initiatives discusses the initiatives undertaken by the University in 2021 to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on student learning and teaching. Similarly attachment 5.4: 2022 L&T initiatives shows the actions undertaken by the University to mitigate the challenges.

Have the actions taken been successful in resolving the problem? What is the evidence supporting progress?

Yes. USP did exceptionally well in ensuring the continuity of learning and teaching for most of its students despite COVID-19. By the end of Semester 1, 2020, only 1,059 students (or 3.96% of the students) had withdrawn from their courses; this is within the average annual 5% withdrawal rate.

The above initiatives and the innovative support from teaching and support staff during the lockdown period in Fiji helped ensure student withdrawals were minimal in the Year 2021. Moreover, pass rates were comparatively consistent with previous years' rates as shown in the table below.

Term	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Semester 1	76%	76%	75%	75%	77%	77%
Semester 2	76%	75%	75%	76%	72%	76.9%

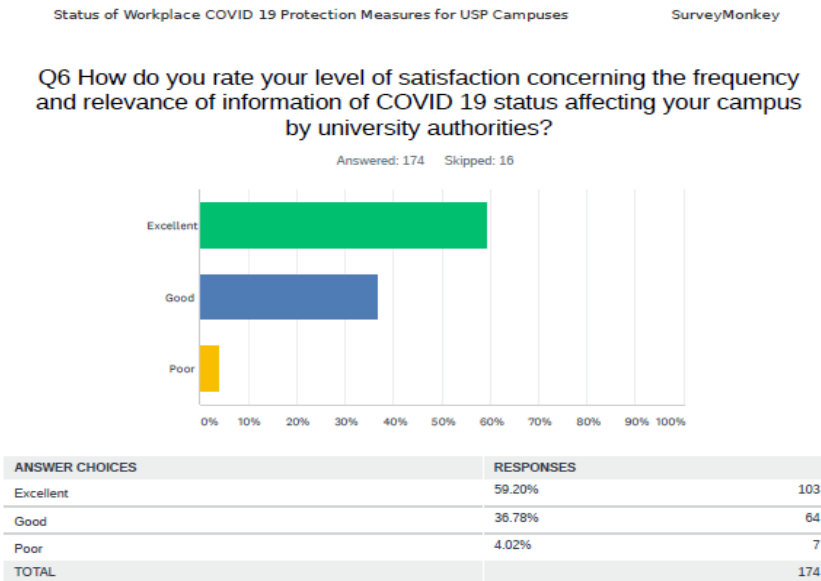
For the rest of the year 2022, the Learning & Teaching Continuity Team will continue to monitor students accessing the University's Learning Management System, Moodle; noting that the access rates were high (about 90%) throughout the first five weeks of lectures.

An online survey was launched on Survey Monkey inviting USP staff and students on email, in all campuses, to provide their feedback and impressions on the way USP managed the COVID-19 Pandemic in various campuses around the campus.

Questions focused on services provided by the 3 USP COVID-19 Pandemic Management Clusters for:

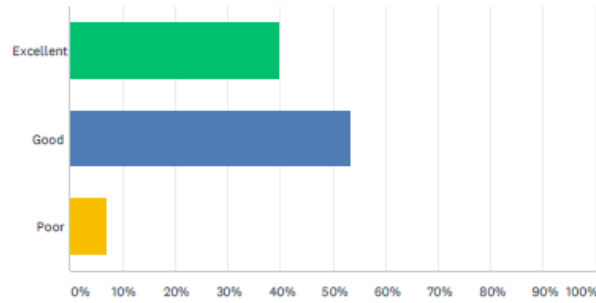
- Communication;
- Procurement and Student Welfare and Support;
- COVID 19 Campus Management;
- Learning and Teaching Continuity.

Below are the results:



Q9 What is your personal level of satisfaction you feel , concerning the COVID 19 safety or distancing measures being implemented in your workplace or campus at this time?

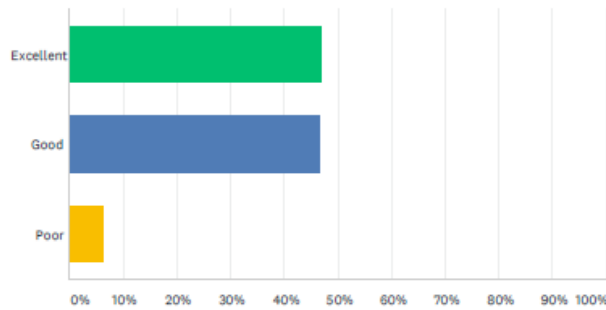
Answered: 174 Skipped: 16



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Excellent	39.66%	69
Good	53.45%	93
Poor	6.90%	12
TOTAL		174

Q10 What is your overall impression of the university's role in preserving your safety and well-being during this current COVID 19 pandemic?

Answered: 174 Skipped: 16



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Excellent	47.13%	82
Good	46.55%	81
Poor	6.32%	11
TOTAL		174

The University is proud of the collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the continuity of learning and teaching and student success. Despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, The University of the South Pacific (USP) continues to strive to punch above its weight.

This comes as USP has been ranked 12th against some of the top Universities of the world in the area of Crisis Management and ranked 101-200 in the Global Top 100 Innovative Universities by the World's Universities with Real Impact (WURI) 2022 global ranking. USP also made the top 20 WURI rankings in 2021, having ranked 11th. WURI assessed USP on how it dealt with external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and technological breakthroughs (e.g. artificial intelligence) "to thrive rather than just to survive".

Concluding Statement

Instructions: Reflect on how the institutional responses to the issues raised by the Commission have had an impact upon the institution, including future steps to be taken.

USP values the status provided by WSCUC Initial Accreditation, and the institution is fully committed to accreditation as an ongoing process. The highlighted issues and SAV1 Review Team Recommendation continue to inform the University's commitment to ongoing improvement in its overall operations, and we are confident that the recommendations will have been met as we approach the Reaffirmation Review period.