



# ChatLAANZ

## **Building a Learning Support Network Post-Merge**

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# Overview

- The merge process and research rationale
- The research – topic, methods, results
- The findings
- The recommendations and implications for
  - Toi Ohomai
  - Te Pūkenga
- Breakout discussions



# The merge

- Bay of Plenty Polytechnic and Waiariki Institute of Technology
- Two main and three regional campuses, 84 delivery sites
- Level 2-9 learners
- 80% face-to-face students, 20% online
- 80% local learners, 20% international
- A forerunner to the formation of Te Pūkenga



# The merger process

- Our 'arranged marriage'
- The 'courtship'
- Comparing / sharing / combining / aligning resources
- Restructuring teams
- Rebranding / renaming roles and services
- Staff and student voice





# Research rationale – what did / do our students think?

- How we combined / rationalised the services to create coherence for them
- What were / are students using and how?
- What is working? / What is not?
- What were / are the gaps?
- How are we addressing inequities\*?

\*Addressing inequities is a key aim of Te Pūkenga



# The topic:

## Students' experiences and perceptions of Toi Ohomai support services

- Academic services/resources
- COVID-19 adaptations
- The Toi Ohomai Success and Engagement team
- Population – all Level 2-9 learners - online and on-campus  
(Mokoia, Taupō, Tokoroa, Waipa, Whakatane, Windermere, small delivery sites)

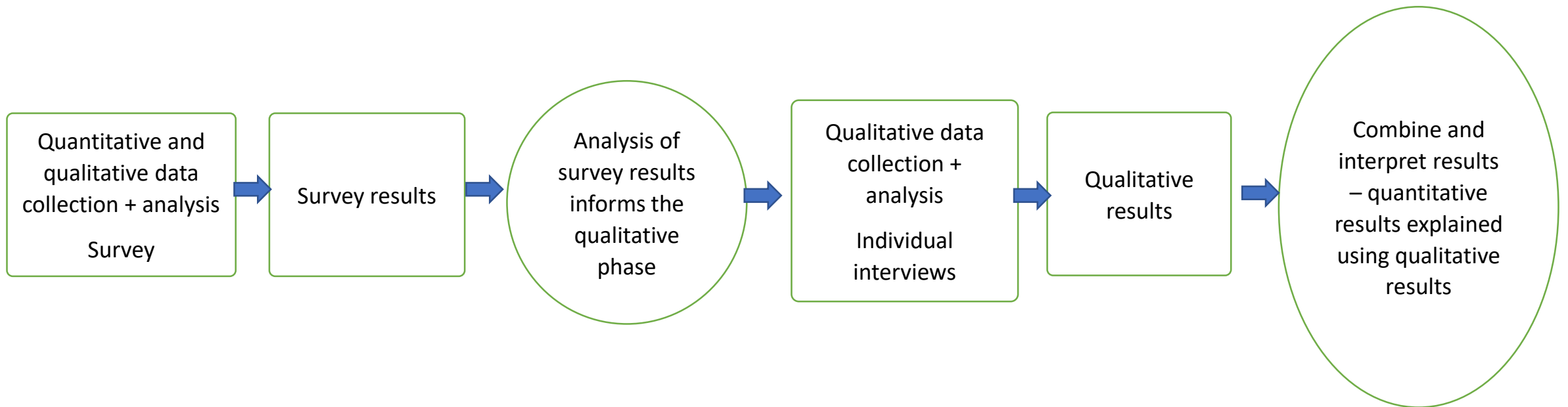


# The main research question

- “What are Toi Ohomai students’ experiences of the institute’s learning support services, and what perceptions do they hold of these services?”
- This question was underpinned by quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods sub-questions.

# Mixed methods

- An explanatory, sequential, mixed-methods design:





# Data collection

- Survey data (n=278)
- 74 participants had studied 'pre-COVID-19'
- 63 volunteered for an interview
  
- Representative selection of
- 12 interviewees - by programme, level, location, delivery mode, gender, ethnicity, background, age...

Section 1 of 16

## Toi Ohomai Learner Success and Engagement Survey Questionnaire

Kia ora,

Ko Ruth Thomas aha. I am a Toi Ohomai Learning Facilitator. This questionnaire is part of a research project called 'Students' experiences and perceptions of learner support services at Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology'.

The project explores how Toi Ohomai academic support services and resources help students to adjust to study and succeed in their courses. As one of our Toi Ohomai students, your feedback and thoughts are of the greatest importance. The questionnaire is expected to take around 15 minutes to complete.

This project was approved by the Research Committee of Toi Ohomai, 14 September 2020 (approval number 20056). Survey completion is taken as agreement to participate in the research and that you agree to your answers being used for the purposes of the research.

When you complete the survey, I will give \$1 to your chosen charity. I have asked for your email address so I can let you know in the new year, how much each charity received.

In 2021, I will interview a number of students to gain their opinions in more detail. You can register your interest at the end of the survey. :-D

Thank you for helping with the research.

Section 16 of 16

## Thank you + an interview invitation

In the new year, I will interview a number of students across different Toi Ohomai courses and locations, to understand students' experiences and opinions in more detail. If you are willing to be interviewed, please could you write your student ID and preferred name in the space below, so I can contact you. It may not be possible to interview everyone who expresses interest.

Thank you so much for your participation and the time you have given to assist with this research.

Ruth Thomas  
Learning Facilitator  
Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology

I am interested in sharing my thoughts in more detail in an interview. I have added my student ID and preferred name below.

Short answer text

# Survey questionnaire

- Why participants did or did not use - pre- and post-COVID-19

## Face-to-Face Services

- Drop-in desk
- Individual appointment
- Group appointment
- In-class support
- Workshop
- Conversational English

## Online Services

- Online drop-in
- Online appointment
- Email support
- Phone support
- Workshop
- Online Conversational English

## Resources

- Hard copy study skills sheets
- Book Now button
- Student Success Online resources
- Student Success Online videos
- Studiosity
- LinkedIn Learning

- What was the most help
- How learning support services and resources could be improved
- Definitions of success

# Interpreting the survey data

- Soliciting responses from regional, trades and foundation students affected the sample as shown, making comparisons difficult.

	Pre-COVID-19* Survey Percentage n=74	Post-COVID-19# Survey Percentage n=278
International	26.6% (actual 20%)	3.6% (actual 9%)
'Trades'/regional learners	2.9%	32.4%

\* Pre-COVID-19 refers to the time up to the March 2020 COVID-19 lockdown

# Post-COVID-19 refers to the time from when campuses closed for the first lockdown, until the survey closed mid-2021

# Survey – pre- and post-COVID-19



- Pre-COVID-19 responses (74):
  - 9.5% ‘didn’t know’ about the services and resources / 17.6% ‘didn’t need’ them = **27.1%**
  - 72.9% suggested they used the services and resources, but **may\*** have been referring to other help
- ‘Post’-COVID-19 responses (278):
  - 32% ‘didn’t know’ about the services and resources / 37% ‘didn’t need’ them = **69%**
  - 31% indicated they used them - many were **definitely\*** referring to other help
- Terminology
  - Learner / learning support, ‘in-class support’ ‘Conversational English’

# Survey responses – why support was not used



- Feeling it was not needed
- Not knowing it was available / how to access it – especially distance learners
- Felt well supported by tutors and/or peers; had quality class resources
- Had built skills to the point they no longer needed to use the services
- Lacked the time to use the services and resources
- Lack of time or unavailability of support
- Wanted to be self-reliant

# Interview questions



- Definitions of success
- What the terms ‘learning/learner support’ meant to participants
- Challenges that made it hard for participants to succeed
  - What participants did when they ‘get stuck’
- How learning support services and resources could be improved
- What barriers stopped whānau, peers, others from succeeding

# COVID-19 – exacerbating the challenges



- Accommodation - vulnerabilities were exploited
- Relationships/family expectations – pressures and misunderstandings
- Technology – devices, platforms, lagging Wi-Fi, thank goodness for TAFL
- Work pressures – essential workers, unaccommodating employers
- Finance – pressure to work, thank goodness for HAFL
- Personal factors – adjusting to study, not asking for help, insufficient confidence, practical learners struggling with theory/information skills/technology
- Lockdown learning – practical tasks, presentations, camera protocols

# Challenges: the usual suspects and the gaps

- Language – learner from kura, international students, terms/accents
- Information literacy – search strategies, reading, notemaking
- Academic writing and referencing
- Working dual or triple platforms - Google, Microsoft and Moodle
- Trying to get an appointment
- Wanting content specialists
- Distance learners difficulty accessing learning and pastoral support:  
“I was alone, no help, I was just sitting and crying and waiting for help, but nothing...”



# Other themes



- Face-to-face interaction preferred
- Success is about more than passing
- More promotion and ways to connect are needed
- Learner voice channels are required
- Lockdown induced improvements

“Learning services help bridge the gap. Post lockdown, I have got more used to using online services.”

“I found this service helpful when I could not attend due to being unwell. It has saved time and petrol to not have to physically come to campus.”

# Recommendations – Toi Ohomai



- Improve online access to support - changes seem to be working as per the most recent Student Experience survey (we are working on a self-orientation space and videos)
- Personalise online support to embody the best of face-to-face
- Develop further mechanisms to connect more learners to learning support
- Increase availability of Learning Facilitators ( done)
- Adjust / clarify terminology

# Recommendations – Te Pūkenga



- Services / resources at any campus available to any Te Pūkenga student
- Out of hours online learning support available to any Te Pūkenga learner
- Develop whole-of-Te Pūkenga learning support self-help resources to sit alongside localised resources
- Develop learner voice mechanisms as per the new Pastoral Care Code (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2021).

# References

- Ministry of Education. (2021). *Education (pastoral care of tertiary and international learners) code of practice 2021*.  
<https://www.education.govt.nz/further-education/information-for-tertiary-students/code-of-practice-pastoral-care-domestic-tertiary/>

# Breakout discussions

1. What would 'courtship' for learning support staff in Te Pūkenga look like?
2. How might we share information on our services and resources?
3. What would the ideal support network look like from your perspective?
4. How would we facilitate staff and student voice in the process?

