

ATLAANZ Professional Practice Document

Introduction

This document has been prepared by members of ATLAANZ, to articulate the professional practice of tertiary learning advisors (TLAs) in Aotearoa New Zealand. We hope that the document will benefit members by explaining our profession to ‘outsiders’ and, in so doing, safeguard and promote our status within our institutions and the tertiary sector as a whole.

It provides a useful job description for new TLAs and an induction guide for those supporting them to enter the profession. Arguably, the greatest potential benefit of this professional practice document is its role in helping tertiary learning advisors in Aotearoa New Zealand develop a clear sense of identity and belonging.

Development of the Document

In 2003 and 2004, ATLAANZ members developed a draft professional practice document that described some of the principles, knowledge and roles that underpin the work of learning advisors (Cameron et al., 2005). It was hoped this would be a first step towards the development of a formal professional practice document for TLAs in Aotearoa New Zealand, developed ‘from scratch’, rather than one adapted from an existing document from a similar organisation elsewhere. This approach was adopted because the Aotearoa New Zealand experience was considered sufficiently different from that of other countries to warrant developing an ‘endemic’ document. More importantly, it was felt that any professional practice document should recognise the diversity of practitioners and settings within the ATLAANZ community.

The draft professional practice document was developed over 2003–2004: participants at a 2003 ATLAANZ conference workshop identified common understandings of the role of a learning advisor (Cameron et al., 2003). ATLAANZ members provided feedback on subsequent discussion documents; participants at a 2004 ATLAANZ conference workshop further modified the document, and the updated version was discussed during the final plenary of the 2004 conference. It was emphasised that the document was in no way definitive; discussions about the nature of professional practice were just beginning, and there were aspects that had not yet been considered. While there was clear consensus that ATLAANZ was not ready to *formally* adopt a professional practice document, those present at the plenary affirmed the value of such a document and supported trialling the 2004 draft version within individual institutions.

The final draft professional practice document (see Cameron et al., 2005) identified some of the principles and values that underpin learning advisors’ work; outlined the knowledge, skills and attributes of learning advisors; and described the roles and responsibilities. The document did not include learning advisors’ ‘practice’ and touched only briefly on qualifications.

Since 2004, discussions of professionalism have formed a significant part of ATLAANZ conferences. In 2012, the ATLAANZ executive committee reviewed the document. Draft material was added in the ‘Practice’ section, based on the findings of a comprehensive 2008 survey of 31 learning centres in Aotearoa New Zealand (Cameron & Catt, 2008), and the ‘Qualifications / Experience’ section was expanded. That updated document was circulated to ATLAANZ members for comment and further modification.

Commented [GU1]: This section has been shortened. Members can access more information via the referenced resources.

Formal Adoption of the Document

At ATLAANZ's 2012 annual general meeting, members unanimously agreed that the revised version of the document (pp. 3-4) be formally adopted by the association and reviewed every two years prior to the association's conference.

References

- Cameron, C., & Catt, C. (2008, November 19-21). *Learning centre practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand* [Paper presentation]. Annual International Conference of the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ATLAANZ), Porirua, New Zealand.
- Cameron, C., Fraser, C., Looser, F., & Thorns, G. (2003). Creating a professional identity. In *Learning talk: Proceedings of the 2003 Annual International Conference of the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ATLAANZ)* (pp. 143-146). ATLAANZ.
- Cameron, C., Fraser, C., Looser, F., & Thorns, G. (2005). Creating a professional identity: A draft professional practice document. In B. Morris (Ed.), *Building bridges: Diversity in practice. Proceedings of the 2004 Annual International Conference of the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ATLAANZ)* (pp. 19-25). ATLAANZ. <https://researcharchive.lincoln.ac.nz/handle/10182/4516>

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1. Principles and Values

Learning advisors value:

- their partnership obligations under **Te Tiriti o Waitangi** and biculturalism in the Aotearoa New Zealand context
- the principles of equity and equal educational opportunities for all **ākonga**
- professional and ethical practice
- learning autonomy and lifelong learning
- a student-focused approach, which has regard for students' diverse backgrounds, knowledge, skills and personal experiences of learning
- fairness, flexibility and open mindedness in their academic and collegial relationships.

2. Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

Learning advisors:

- are actively involved in research into learning and teaching practice
- use evidence-based learning and teaching best practice to inform their teaching
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the metacognitive and learning processes in adult education
- effectively facilitate learning in the adult education context
- demonstrate qualities of aroha, **tauawhi and manaakitanga**
- are committed to their own learning and professional development.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

a) In our work with students

Learning advisors facilitate the academic achievement of ākonga by:

- **demystifying institutional academic processes**
- helping students **develop academic literacies**
- helping students develop numeracy knowledge
- encouraging students to use strategies to manage their own learning
- encouraging students' self-confidence as learners.

b) Within our 'community of practice'

Learning advisors:

- engage in reflective practice within institutional teams and within the wider community of learning advisors.

c) Within our institutions

Learning advisors:

- **work in partnership with a range of other staff to improve learning and teaching in the institution**
- contribute to the setting of institutional guidelines and work within those guidelines.

4. Practice

Learning advisors work with students, staff and/or external groups in the following ways:

- face-to-face and online
- with whole cohorts / small groups / individually
- in workshops and courses, both embedded and generic
- in lectures – embedded and generic
- with online and print resources

Commented [GU2]: To account for flexible learning locations and practices

Commented [GU3]: To recognise the place of print alongside online resources

in order to provide

- academic literacy development
- numeracy development
- information literacy development
- digital literacy development
- personal skills and pastoral support
- orientation programmes
- transition programmes
- PASS / peer support programmes
- testing and assessment
- staff / tutor development.

Commented [GU4]: To separate and explicitly recognise skill areas

Many learning advisors are also active in:

- supervision of research students
- research on teaching and learning
- liaison with lecturers/tutors and other academic staff
- academic / executive committee work.

5. Qualifications / Experience

Learning advisors

- have a graduate qualification in an appropriate discipline
- have a teaching qualification and/or significant relevant experience at the tertiary level
- have qualifications and experience relevant to the specific institutional role (e.g., a TESOL qualification if working with EAL students; a research degree if working with postgraduate students).