



Briefing Note: Student Voice Summit speech notes

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
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Purpose

This briefing note provides you with background information, draft speech notes (annex one) and Q&As (annex two) for your appearance as a speaker at the 2021 Student Voice Summit on 19 November. This is an annual event hosted jointly by the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA), partner associations and the Academic Quality Agency (AQA).

Proactive release

The Ministry of Education recommends you **agree** that this briefing will be proactively released following your appearance at the Student Voice Summit

Agree / Disagree



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Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

18/11/2021

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Background

Student Voice Summit

1. On 19th November 2021, from 10.00am to 10.45 am, you will be attending the annual Student Voice Summit (the Summit) via Zoom. It is anticipated that over 100 existing and emerging student leaders will attend, as well as key sector officials and staff.
2. This is the first session of the conference and you have been asked to speak on student partnership and initiatives you are encouraging to grow learner voice in the sector. There will also be a question and answers session. The likely timing will be as follows:

10:00-10:10	The Summit starts, welcome and karakia.
10:10-10:25	Student leaders will introduce Whiria Ngā Rau, and present it to you as a gift from students to the tertiary sector
10:25-10:35	You speak about your vision for student partnership and the initiatives you are planning, to grow and strengthen learner voice in the tertiary sector
10:35-10:45	Q&A from the audience

3. NZUSA has also indicated they would like to present 'Whiria Ngā Rau: Progressing from Student Voice to Partnerships' to you (representing the sector), as a gift from students to the tertiary sector.
4. The 2021 Summit differs from previous years, as it is the first all-of-sector summit; previously universities and ITPs had separate summits. The focus will extend beyond student voice in academic quality to include a wider range of contexts for student voice and partnership, such as student wellbeing and safety and governance.
5. Ministry of Education (the Ministry) officials have been invited to speak in later sessions, particularly on initiatives such as Whiria Ngā Rau, and the Domestic Tertiary Student Contract Dispute Resolution Scheme.

Background on Whiria Ngā Rau

6. Whiria Ngā Rau is a framework that progresses students' ambition to build on student voice in tertiary education, shifting from a concept of student voice to student and sector partnerships. The intention of the tool is to help student leaders work together and work with providers, agencies, and the broader sector as partners in decision making.
7. The framework was developed by leaders from Te Mana Akonga, NZUSA, Tauira Pasifika, the National Disabled Students' Association, with support from the Ministry of Education.

8. The idea for Whiria Ngā Rau emerged from the work of student networks during COVID-19, where they worked closely with government to communicate, share issues and needs facing learners and inform policy responses. This new way of working more collaboratively with each other, led the student networks to consider how they could share their expertise around student voice, and embed a partnership model in the sector that is centred on learners.
9. Whiria Ngā Rau draws from Te Rito o Te Harakeke, a Māori whakataukī on whānau, that focuses on obligations to nurture, support, and awhi the next generation. In Whiria Ngā Rau, the students are positioned as at the centre of the learner journey in tertiary education, supported by four rau: whakapakari (strengthening student voice), whakawhanaungatanga (building connections together), akoranga (learning with and from each other) and mahi tahi (working together as partners).¹
10. There is significant alignment between the intent of Whiria Ngā Rau and the strategic vision you have set for the tertiary sector. Objective 1 of the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) places learners at the centre of the system. This sets to 'review, expand and strengthen current mechanisms to hear and act on learner/ākonga voice, and understand the views of whānau and communities' as a key priority for tertiary education organisations.
11. Whiria Ngā Rau has been well received and is already being used across the sector to guide thinking about student engagement and partnerships. It has been integrated by the AQA into their quality assurance audits of the university sector. The Executive Leadership team at Te Pūkenga have also adopted this framework as their model for progressing partnerships with learners. It is our understanding that the collaborative development of Whiria Ngā Rau is unprecedented internationally.

Growing learner voice and student partnerships

COVID-19 response

12. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, officials from the Ministry, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and other education sector agencies have worked with NZUSA and student network leaders to ensure the needs of students are met swiftly and effectively, and to ensure clear communication channels. For example, officials have attended regular COVID-19 focused meetings with student leaders since the nationwide shift to Alert Level 4 in August 2021.
13. Most recently these have focused on vaccination mandates. NZUSA recently indicated strong support for Government requiring mandatory vaccinations for in-person tertiary study to reduce confusion and uncertainty for learners compared to adopting a more flexible approach. However, there have been concerns that mandatory vaccinations could exacerbate existing inequities in tertiary education, including for Māori, Pacific, disabled, and rural learners.

¹ The framework also drew on the experience of other international student voice initiatives, for example, the Australian Principles for Student Engagement for Australian Tertiary Institutions.

14. We have heard positive stories from student associations about learners and providers working in partnership to combat these potential inequities in providers' COVID-19 responses. Examples of these include:
- learners from Otago University Students' Association organising "by and for Māori" vaccination drives, and working to create a website of collated information to support vaccine-hesitant learners to make decisions about vaccination ; and
 - students at Manukau Institute of Technology working with staff to provide in-home, personalised, and culturally appropriate support for Māori and Pacific learners and families who are vaccine-hesitant.

Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 and the Domestic Student Contract Dispute Resolution Scheme

15. The Code of Practice for tertiary student wellbeing and safety has been emphasised by learners as important to improving wellbeing and safety, and strengthening student voice.
16. The new code, which will come into effect by 1 January 2022, threads student voice throughout the document. In addition, outcome 2 requires providers to have practices to strengthen student voice. These include building and engaging with diverse learner voice, providing resources and information to enable students to fully participate in decision-making processes, and working with learners to develop, review, and improve learner wellbeing and safety strategic goals, plans and practices. The code also requires that providers work with learners to respond to and process complaints and ensure processes are accessible and culturally responsive.
17. The Domestic Student Contract Dispute Resolution Scheme will also be operating on 1 January 2022 and will provide an independent mechanism for learners and providers to resolve disputes on financial and contractual matters.
18. Student associations were heavily involved in the development of the code and dispute resolution scheme. NZUSA also participated in targeted consultation on near-final drafts of the code and the dispute resolution scheme rules, and involvement in a sector advisory group for the code's development (its involvement in this group remains ongoing, as it supports the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in the implementation of the code).
19. Two student leaders were also members of the evaluation panel that provided advice to you regarding the operator of the dispute resolution scheme [METIS 1272227 refers], providing valuable student input.

Te Pūkenga learner voice

20. Learner voice in the vocational education and training (VET) sector is not as developed as in other tertiary education sub-sectors, particularly universities. NZUSA has historically had a primarily university learner cohort, although it is trying to grow its reach into the VET sector, including to learners enrolled at Te Pūkenga.

21. This year, Te Pūkenga established an Interim Learner Advisory Committee with representatives from each of its subsidiaries, whose role is to provide learner perspectives for Te Pūkenga's policy development and strategic governance processes. Members of this Committee have been included in recent meetings about COVID-19 between the Ministry and student leaders, including NZUSA. These representatives have been key in providing the Ministry with insights about the impacts of COVID-19 for regional and vocational learners.

Kia Ōrite and Disability Action Plans

22. The National Disabled Students' Association was developed this year and has been involved with other learner networks in key initiatives including the Code and COVID-19 response work. They have also worked with the TEC to develop the refreshed Kia Ōrite Toolkit of guidance to assist tertiary education staff to build confidence in supporting disabled learners and developing Disability Action Plans.

Tauira Pasifika

23. Tauira Pasifika have partnered with the Ministry of Education, with support from the TEC, to complete a survey to capture what Pacific Students want and need to be successful in education. This included a focus on health and wellbeing supports.
24. The results of the survey will be an important resource for the sector and Government, able to inform sector initiatives and policy development to enable better support for Pacific learners to achieve their educational goals.

Other information

25. You have met with NZUSA on Thursday 18 November, and we provided advice to you around the issues they were likely to raise [METIS 1277192 refers]. We anticipate that those topics are likely to be similar to those that are important to other networks attending the Summit, and we have provided some brief Q&A at annex two to help you respond in the event that these issues are raised. These include:
- the implementation of the Hardship Fund for Learners (HAFL). Student networks have also asked for increases to the amount available through the HAFL.
 - the importance of consistency in approach around vaccination requirements for in-person tertiary study, and information around the new COVID-19 Protection Framework and how it will apply.
26. Guidance is being developed currently with the sector, including learners and providers, on how the COVID-19 Protection Framework will apply for tertiary education. We expect to release the guidance to the sector next week.
27. Students also renewed requests for a temporary 'Universal Education Income' in the 'National Student Action Plan for COVID-19' that was presented to you

in 2020 and 2021. This called for all StudyLink income support to be extended to all domestic students.

28. Mental health and wellbeing support is a key issue for students. We are working with learners, and the Ministry of Health on the roll-out of the \$25 million tertiary student wellbeing package. Learners have raised concerns about the speed of delivery and the level of funding.
29. We have also heard from learners that there remains strong interest in the development of a national centre for student voice. This proposal emerged from the Korero Maturanga| Education Conversation with strong support from learners. This is not something that is being progressed at this time, however, could be explored as part of a future work programme.