

Ako Aotearoa Central Regional Forum

3 April 2025 | Palmerston North



Cultivating Thought Leadership and Excellence in
Teaching | Shaping the Future of Education

He Whakatipu Hautūtanga Whakaaro me te Akoako
Kounga | Hei Hanga i Te Anamata o te Mātauranga



National Centre for
Tertiary Teaching Excellence

Programme

Note: This programme is subject to change

Time	Action
8.30	Registration, Tea/Coffee
9.00	Welcome
9.20	Waiata
9.25	Poppy Clapperton, Renee Tawhiti and the Industry Training Solutions, All Sorts Team , Empowering Diverse Learners and Transforming Lives and Communities
10.00	Kōrerorero / Talanoa Session One, Facilitation of sector collaboration in tertiary education
10.45	Morning Tea
11.00	Tim Seaholme and Janell Kiriona, UCOL Te Atakura , Can a focus on ākonga Māori learning experiences positively impact on the learning experiences for all ākonga?
11.45	Kōrerorero / Talanoa Session Two, Leadership, Promotion and Celebration of Tertiary Teaching Excellence
12.30	Lunch
1.00	Sharon Crooks and Kathryn McGuigan, Massey University , Communities of Practical! Empowering Diverse Minds through Communities of Practice
1.45	Professor Palatasa Havea, Massey University , Strengthening Pacific Thought Leadership in Education
2.30	Kōrerorero / Talanoa Session Three, Thought Leadership
3.15	Closing and Afternoon Tea

Central Regional Forum presenters

Empowering Diverse Learners and Transforming Lives and Communities

Presenters: Poppy Clapperton, Renee Tawhiti



Poppy Clapperton. With over 20 years experience in vocational training, Poppy believes that education is about transforming lives, especially for Māori, Pacific and neurodivergent learners.

Through Industry Training Solutions (ITS), Poppy's brainchild, she has cultivated an inclusive, welcoming environment filled with manaakitanga; delivering a programme of courses, resources, and activities tailored to meet diverse student needs, all within a framework of individualised and mixed-model learning. The short, intensive courses are delivered nationwide and cater to schools, iwi, community groups, and regional employment initiatives such as Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs.

Since 2021, Poppy, with her husband and dedicated ITS team, has also run the purpose-built All-Sorts Centre, a multifaceted hub for priority learners that promotes holistic learning and whānau with community engagement.



Renee Tawhiti brings over 20 years of industry experience and a deep passion for education, culture, and community to her role as Lead Facilitator of the Skills for Living for Supported Learners & Foundation Skills programmes at ITS. Originally trained as a chef, Renee honed her leadership, teaching, and team management skills in the hospitality sector before transitioning into vocational education.

Since joining ITS in 2023, she has been instrumental in supporting and leading the ITS Skills for Living and Foundation Skills programmes, where she empowers learners with essential life and employment skills.

A fluent speaker of Tongan and a dedicated advocate for Te Ao Māori me ōna tikanga, Renee weaves cultural values into her teaching, ensuring an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. She holds a Level 4 Certificate in Health and Wellbeing (Social and Community Services) and is currently pursuing further professional development in autism education through Ako Aotearoa workshops, adult learning, Te Tiriti o Waitangi implementation, and dyslexia support.

Prior to her role at ITS, Renee worked as a support worker in the emergency housing sector, reinforcing her dedication to helping individuals overcome challenges and unlock their potential. Her mission is simple but profound: to support, guide, and inspire learners to become the best versions of themselves.

Can a focus on ākonga Māori learning experiences positively impact on the learning experiences for all ākonga?

Presenters: Tim Seaholme, Janell Kiriona



Tim Seaholme and **Janell Kiriona** (Ngāti Huia, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāi Tahu, Te Arawa, Muaūpoko) are Te Atakura Coaches at UCOL in Palmerston North, New Zealand. Tim holds an MSc in Exercise Physiology, postgraduate qualifications in teaching, and has over 20 years of experience in tertiary education in both the UK and New Zealand. He has presented at conferences, led workshops, and published research articles. Tim has been an active member of the Te Atakura team since its inception in 2013. Janell possesses a PgCert, a Bachelor of Exercise and Sports Science, and is currently studying towards her Tāhuhu Ahunga Tikanga (Masters in Māori Laws and Philosophy). After initially experiencing Te Atakura as a teacher, she joined the Te Atakura coaching team in 2020. Janell also plays a leading role in Māori cultural capability as Pouahurea – He Kakano Rua. Together, Tim and Janell draw on their diverse culturally located backgrounds, experiences and perspectives as Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti, to lead educational reform in New Zealand's tertiary sector. Both have held leadership positions, are recognised as Teaching Fellows, and have received institutional teaching awards. Their collaborative approach centres on embedding and sustaining Te Atakura within UCOL and beyond, fostering inclusive and effective educational practices that prioritise ākonga Māori and enhance the educational experiences and outcomes of all.



Communities of Practical! Empowering Diverse Minds through Communities of Practice

Presenters: Dr Sharon Crooks, Dr Kathryn McGuigan



Dr Sharon Crooks is a lecturer in social psychology and postgraduate supervisor within the School of Psychology at Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand. Her research interests are predominately neurodiversity focused, especially at the intersection of cooccurring health conditions and/or within ecological contexts that constrain and impact alternative ways of being and making sense. Sharon has ADHD, was a high school drop-out, and is using this second-chance educational experience to spotlight the systemic struggles of smart people, notably neurodivergent tertiary students constrained by neuro-normative privilege. She is a qualitative researcher favouring phenomenological approaches that give voice to experts and gets to the heart of their experiences.



Dr Kathryn McGuigan is a senior lecturer in Health and Social psychology at Massey University, Auckland campus, New Zealand. Her research interests are broadly in the area of critical health psychology using qualitative methodologies. More specifically Kathryn is interested in exploring the intersections of health and wellbeing within disability, neurodivergence, eating and food practices, and gender. Kathryn is a passionate ally for social justice for disability and neurodiversity with recent research focusing on neurodivergent tertiary students experiences. Kathryn is also passionate about innovative qualitative methods including arts based research.

Strengthening Pacific Thought Leadership in Education

Presenter: Professor Palatasa (Tasa) Havea



Professor Palatasa (Tasa) Havea's career has been dedicated to advancing the Pacific community and the dairy industry in New Zealand. As Dean Pacific at Massey University since 2020, he has led transformative initiatives that have dramatically improved Pacific students' education outcomes. His leadership in the New Zealand dairy industry has led to groundbreaking technologies, generating substantial economic returns. Recognised for his contributions, he was honoured with the Queen's Medal, MNZM in 2018. He is committed to fostering diversity, building capacity, and driving positive change in education, governance, and community development, demonstrating his career-long commitment to impactful, outcome-driven initiatives.

Pūtahi Mātauranga | Knowledge Centre

Our website-based Knowledge Centre has over 1500 free resources available to those working in tertiary education, vocational and workplace training. This wide range of free practical resources support staff to build teaching and learning practice to benefit learners.

The outputs are developed from our research projects and other initiatives. We encourage people to download them from ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre and share widely.

Our Manako programme

Ako Aotearoa's Manako team focuses on building educator capability to enhance cultural capability and Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) success for all learners. 'Manako' means "aspiration" and "hope" in te ao Māori.

Some key components to the Manako programme include the Dyslexia-Friendly Quality Mark and the Tapatoru | Ako Professional Practice Award. The programme also involves high-quality professional learning and development courses and workshops, online webinars, educator pathways hosted on Pathways Awarua, plus leading work on learner agency digital literacy and neurodiversity.

Huihuinga Tāngata | Strategic forums and sector events

We are proud to run strategic events in priority areas of tertiary education in Aotearoa. These events include the Regional Forums hosted by our Northern, Central and Southern Hubs, and Tuia Te Ako (our national Māori tertiary education hui). We also collaborate, sponsor and contribute to a range of sector events organised by other groups.

Find us on:

 facebook.com/AkoAotearoa  linkedin.com/company/ako-aotearoa  instagram.com/akoaooteaoroa

Connect with us

Christina Crews

Sector Services Manager
for Central region

M: 021 705 214

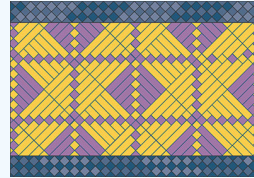
E: christinacrews@ako.ac.nz

With over 16 years of experience at Ako Aotearoa, Christina is an integral part of the central region's tertiary education community. Her energetic personality and commitment to supporting educators in achieving learner success for all ākonga drives her work. Christina is deeply invested in collaboration to support priority learners working closely with tertiary providers to enhance educational practice and strengthen sector-wide connections.

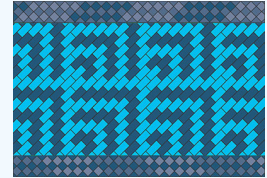


Te Pātaka Mātauranga Māori | Storehouse of Māori Knowledge

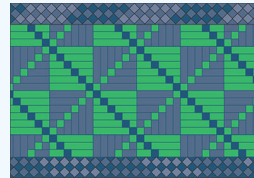
Since June 2022, our Pātaka or storehouse has been making it easier for visitors to our website to find content relating to Mātauranga Maori, Kaupapa Maori, success for Maori learners and building cultural capability. Visit ako.ac.nz/te-pataka-matauranga-maori and explore the Pātaka's four kete:



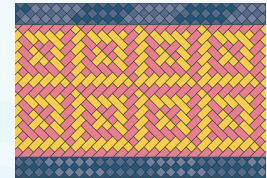
Te Kete Rauemi
Mātauranga
Kete of Māori
Resources



Te Kete Āheitanga
Ahurea Māori
Māori Cultural
Capability Kete



Te Kete
Whakaputanga-Tiriti
Declaration-Treaty Kete



Te Kete Huihuinga
Tāngata
Kete of Events

Communities of Practice

We facilitate two online communities of practice (CoP): our Manako CoP is for educators in the adult language, literacy and numeracy space. You are welcome to join at facebook.com/groups/alnacc and participate in the discussions. Our Neurodiversity CoP is for anyone with expertise or interest in neurodiversity. Contact Graeme at Graeme.Read@ako.ac.nz if you'd like to join. We are pleased to support the development of other CoPs in the tertiary sector, whether it be within an organisation or across institutions.



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