Prime Minister's Supreme Award
and
Sustained Excellence in Tertiary Teaching General Category

Andrew Eberhard

Business School
The University of Auckland

"I love helping students who are struggling to reach that 'Aha!' moment when they finally climb out of the pit of learning and exclaim 'I've got it!'

Andrew Eberhard has taught over 20,000 students in the last decade. He is known as an engaging and motivating teacher who cares deeply about his students. His innovative teaching and personal talent bring out the best in both struggling and talented students alike and inspires best practice in his colleagues.

In 1994, Andrew became the first person in his family to attend university. He thrived in the environment at the University of Auckland, became a Tutor in Information Systems in 2000, later a full-time Senior Tutor and then a Professional Teaching Fellow (PTF) – one of the first in the University – in 2011. With its emphasis on teaching innovation and dissemination, this role fits his practices and priorities well, and his impact extends from his own faculty to across the university and beyond. In 2018, he was promoted to Director – Business Masters Programmes in the Graduate School of Management, where he oversees more than 60 courses a year.

Since becoming a PTF, Andrew has also been involved in many teaching service roles. He was the curriculum director for the university's new Business Analytics major, helped to pilot a new learning management system – Canvas, has served on many committees and project working groups, and was the first PTF elected to the University Senate.

During his time teaching in the University of Auckland Business School's Department of Information Systems and Operations Management (ISOM), Andrew has contributed to courses such as Database Applications, Business Productivity Tools, Information Systems Technology, Accounting Information Systems, and Business Systems.

"I am passionate about finding ways of enhancing student learning in large classroom settings and supporting my colleagues to manage teaching at scale."

The most challenging but rewarding course of Andrew's teaching career has been teaching the large INFOSYS110 Business Systems course (1,000+ students per semester), which is compulsory for all undergraduate students in the Business School. When he took the course on, it had a poor reputation – students thought it would be too technical and boring, especially as most of them were new to university study and many were international or first-in-family students. Andrew helped introduce a series of operational and pedagogical innovations to enhance student learning and improve student feedback, transforming student perceptions of Information Systems.

"Excellent teaching in Information Systems is about motivating students to take a lead in discovering and exploring the field."

Andrew's approach to teaching excellence involves captivating and engaging students (giving them examples which make them marvel about technology), connecting with them (making the subject come to life), cultivating their passion for the subject, and capacity-building (disseminating innovations and good teaching practice to enable colleagues to improve their teaching).

He has been successful in engaging large numbers of students – often in lecture rooms holding around 550 students – by developing both in-class and outside-class activities. Although he uses very little technology in class, he makes extensive use of it to engage students outside of the classroom.

For in-class activities, he uses compelling stories, such as videos, which he opens for discussion and links to the underlying principles, theories and technologies of Information Systems. He captivates students by making the underlying technology seem real, sometimes bringing in physical artifacts, rather than just using imagery, and weaving a story from his past into the content. Outside-class activities used to engage students include providing prompt and meaningful feedback on assessment for students, usually via screencast.

"This approach allows me to be rigorous and critical without undermining their confidence. They can hear from my tone of voice that the feedback is intended to help them improve. Nuance and tone are often lost in typed feedback."

As using video is not always possible, Andrew piloted CrowdMark in INFOSYS 110 and helped roll it out across the rest of the University. This is a collaborative online grading and analytics platform that allows grading to be done anywhere and anytime. It makes it possible to mark and release (with feedback) 1,000 scripts over a weekend. Andrew also uses Piazza, an online gathering place where students can ask, answer, and explore questions under the guidance of teaching staff. He encourages students to draw upon their personal experience to construct knowledge, which he believes is best gained through building things that are tangible and sharable.

Helping struggling students is one of Andrew's passions, as he understands the many reasons they may find university study difficult, and he has received a fellowship to support his work in identifying, supporting and mentoring 'at-risk' students. He cultivates talented students' passion for information technology by leading competitions, such as the University of Auckland Microsoft Imagine Cup programme, which provides opportunities for students across all disciplines to team up and create applications, games and integrate solutions. He also coaches students in challenges, such as Velocity, the UoA entrepreneurship development programme.

Andrew believes in sharing knowledge and empowering his colleagues. He helped to design, develop and implement an Educational Technology Hub for the University of Auckland staff and helped establish a self-service video recording tool, the One Button Studio, as a useful tool for the wider University.

Andrew's teaching awards include Faculty Teaching Excellence Awards in 2011, 2012, 2015, 2016 and 2018, University Teaching Excellence Awards in Innovation in 2012, and Leadership in 2018, and a Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy in 2018.

"I feel fortunate to have a job I love and the opportunity to make a difference."