

2025 Pastoral Care Code Self-Review

The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary & International Learners) Code of Practice



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Information to inform this self-review was collected through a mapping exercise against each Code process requirements in Outcomes 1 to 4. Special thanks are given to all groups and individuals who contributed to this review including Grievance and Academic Process team, Disability Action, Equity and Inclusion, Office of Treaty Partnership, Pacific Development Team, People and Culture, Rec and Sport, Strategy and Planning, Student Care, Student Operations, Student Wellbeing, UC Rainbow Student Support.

Executive Summary

In line with NZQA guidance on the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary & International Learners) Code of Practice (Code), the UC 2025 self-review focused on examining areas previously identified by UC as benefiting from enhancement. This includes student complaints processes, staff capability and training, equity and inclusion, and improved communications and visibility of support services.

The self-review acknowledged that in 2025 UC undertook substantial targeted work to address areas previously identified as benefiting from enhancement, with clear evidence of progress across them. This reflects a deliberate and systematic approach to responding to identified areas, supported by resourcing, structured planning, and ongoing monitoring.

Notable examples of enhancement work relevant to the Code include the simplification and redesign of student facing complaints information, comprehensive benchmarking of complaints practices against sector best practice, and the establishment of a structured roadmap for further improvement. UC strengthened its approach to staff capability through expanded, role-appropriate training aligned with Code requirements, supported by significant resourcing, systematic monitoring, feedback, and planned augmentation through 2026 and beyond. In parallel, increased resourcing and maturation of the Equity and Inclusion function established a basis for more coordinated, preventative and system-level responses to inclusion, accessibility and harmful behaviours.

Improving the clarity, accessibility and navigability of information about support services remained a priority, with enhancements to webpages, wellbeing communications and peer-based entry points designed to reduce uncertainty for students about where to seek help.

UC is firmly committed to achieving positive wellbeing and safety outcomes for its student community. The 2025 self-review identified a mature, whole-of-provider approach, where reflection and continuous institutional learning underpin the ongoing development of pastoral care practices, along with a pipeline of further initiatives planned for 2026.

2024 Self-Review Summary

The 2024 self-review concluded that Code outcomes 1 to 4 were well implemented at UC. This judgement was based on systematic mapping of Code process requirements against UC systems, services and practices, supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence from institutional data, student surveys, student representatives and staff across 18 teams. Student satisfaction with wellbeing, safety and support services was consistently high, and external assurance processes affirmed UC's approach.

Areas for Enhancement

The 2024 self-review identified the following key areas for enhancement:

- Complaints – Simplifying processes and improving student understanding of how to raise complaints.
- Staff Training – Continued development of staff training aligned with the Code.
- Equity and Inclusion – Continued strengthening of initiatives and content, including practical actions to support stated commitments.
- Improved communication and visibility of support services to ensure students know where to start and how to access help.

2025 Self-Review Areas of Enhancement

Complaints

UC provides clear and accessible information to students on how to raise concerns or make a formal complaint which meets Code requirements. Changes were made that improved visibility and navigation;

- dedicated webpages that explain available options and guide students to the appropriate process based on the nature and seriousness of the issue.
- simplification of the student-facing information with clear step-by-step instructions and links to relevant supporting documents.

In parallel, UC initiated a longer-term programme of work to review its complaints and feedback processes, policies and practices, with the aim of strengthening outcomes for students, staff, stakeholders and the wider community. This review found UC meets international best practice expectations in most areas, while also identifying specific opportunities to further enhance the effectiveness of its complaints management. UC will continue enhancing this area in 2026 using the review as a guide for continuous improvement.

Staff Training

UC recognises that effective pastoral care depends on staff capability being regularly reviewed, strengthened and adapted in response to emerging risks, student needs, feedback and regulatory expectations. Staff training is delivered through a mixture of content on UC's learning management system and in-person training that is available to all continuing and fixed term staff.

During 2025, UC delivered a broad range of staff training initiatives aligned with cultural capability, inclusion, wellbeing, privacy and safe practice. Examples of centrally delivered programmes included:

- Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogy workshops, Tangata Tū, Tangata Ora and Te Reo in the Workplace, delivered by UC Māori
- responding to disclosures of harmful sexual behaviour delivered to a range of stakeholders, including residential assistants across all accommodation providers, club executives, Student Wellbeing Navigators and faculty teams on request.

Enhancement of staff training offerings will continue into 2026. Planned initiatives include the introduction of multiple face-to-face courses focused on suicide prevention, SafeSide Suicide Prevention Training for staff in the Health Centre and Student Care teams, and the rollout of an additional core module on Health and Safety.

Equity and Inclusion

UC strengthened its approach to equity and inclusion through increased resourcing, expanded training delivery and the progressive development of policy and system level responses. The full team now includes dedicated roles covering disability action, inclusion and equity, prevention and response to harmful sexual behaviour, and Rainbow communities.

UC's Disability Action Lead began facilitating the codesign of sensory-friendly spaces and pods in partnership with Facilities Management and a neurodivergent student advisory group.

UC continued to strengthen its institutional approach to preventing and responding to discrimination and harmful behaviours through system, policy and practice development, including:

- reviewing digital systems to improve reporting and analysis of the types of cases and incidents managed across the University, with the aim of better informing prevention strategies and proactive responses.
- developing a standardised response practice through the development of Harmful Sexual Behaviour response procedures, process flowcharts, support service guides and support cards, promoting consistent and informed practice.
- drafting DevelopMe training modules and advancing the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Policy and associated support guidance, with implementation planned for 2026.

Improved communication and visibility of support services

The 2024 self-review identified that UC made sustained efforts to communicate information about support services to students through multiple channels, however, it was noted how the breadth of services and the volume of information can make it difficult for students to navigate.

In response, UC undertook actions intended to strengthen the visibility, clarity and navigability of information about student support services.

- Student facing webpages for wellbeing and support services were updated to improve the accessibility of information, including clearer explanations of support options and how to initiate contact with appropriate services.
- Utilisation of digital channels, in person events and peer-led initiatives, focusing on normalising help-seeking behaviour and directing students to entry points such as Student Care and the UC Health Centre.
- Peer support mechanisms, including the Kaiwhakatere Oranga Wellbeing Navigators, were further utilised as visible and approachable sources of information and referral.

2026 Areas of Focus

Wellbeing Student Support Hub

A major focus in 2026 builds on UC enhancing the visibility and accessibility of student support services and involves scoping for the establishment of a Student Support Hub. This initiative aims to align with the existing support services (Te Pātaka) and bring together a range of support teams/services into a single, central location, creating a clear entry point for core pastoral care and other front-facing wellbeing services. In combining physical co-location with enhanced technology to support information sharing and stronger case management, the Hub seeks to streamline operations, enable faster and more coordinated responses, and deliver a more seamless, student-centred experience.

Reflective Summary

The 2025 self-review demonstrates UC's strong commitment to continuously improving its pastoral care practices, with significant progress achieved through evidence informed initiatives and regular self-review. We have taken an iterative approach, incorporating student feedback and organisational learning to drive ongoing improvement. UC continues to prioritise high-impact initiatives that support student wellbeing and safety. Many of the developments implemented in 2025 focus on building sustainable systems and long-term capability, with further enhancements planned for 2026 and beyond.