A Guide to Teaching Māori Content in University Courses

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou
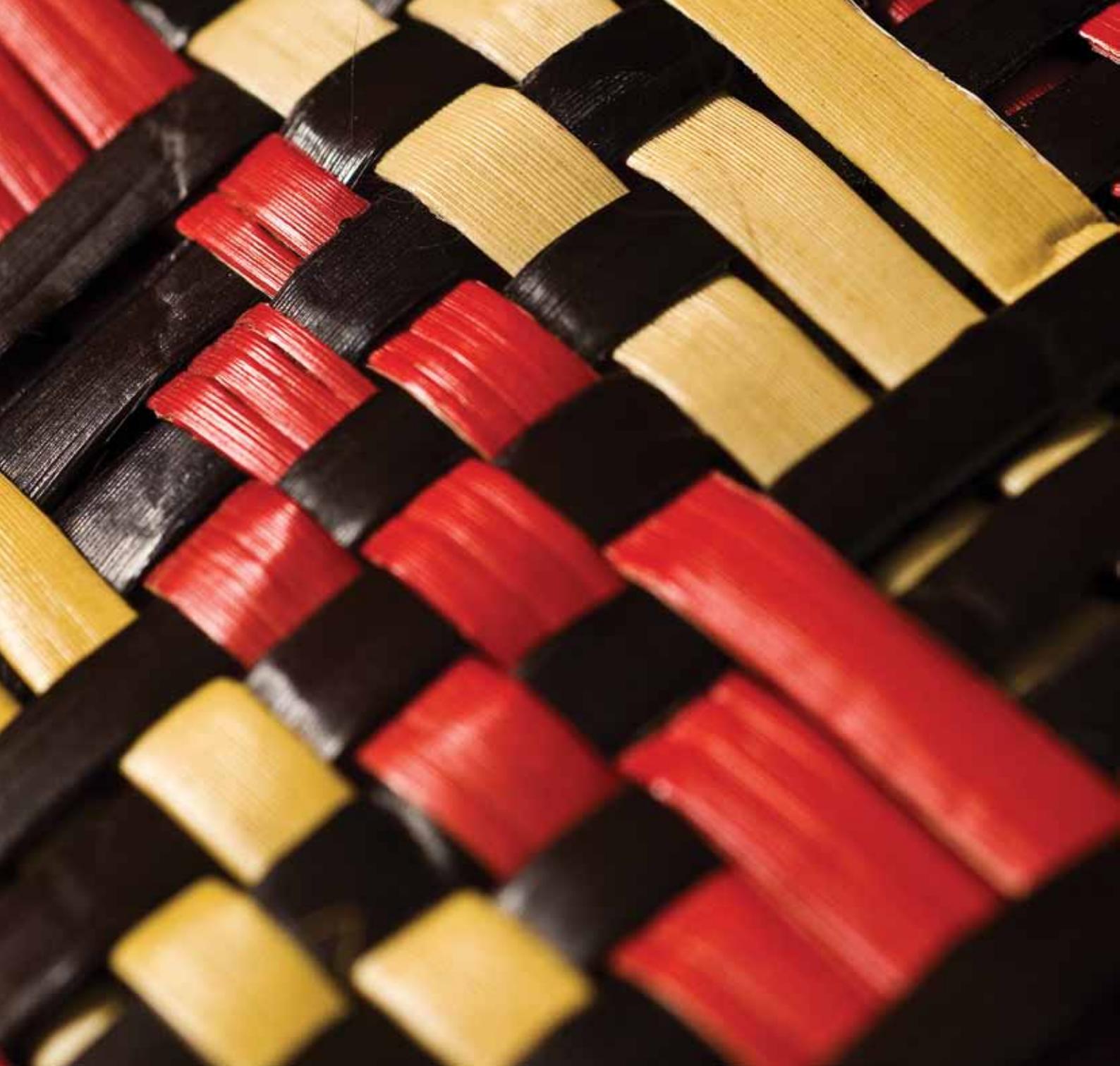
Introduction

Even successful teachers can find it difficult to teach students and incorporate content from a culture that is not their own. Teaching for diversity, supporting minority students, and using culturally-responsive teaching practices are well-known concepts (for example, Airini, O'Shea, Tarawa, Sauni, Ulugia-Pua, Sua-Huirua, & Curtis, 2007; Bevan-Brown, 2005; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2009; Cummins, 2001; Gay, 2000; Ramsden, 2003; Zepke & Leach, 2005). However, the transition from understanding the theory to implementing it in practice is often complicated—and when such practice requires teachers to step outside their cultural comfort zones, it can be downright intimidating (McDonald, 2008).

In New Zealand universities, there is a common assumption that Māori academic staff are the most suitable people to teach Māori content and Māori students (Smith, 1991; Gallhofer, Haslam, Nam Kim & Mariu, 1999; Gorinski & Abernethy, 2007). While Māori staff do usually have strengths in this area, an obvious problem is there are too few Māori academics. For those non-Māori academics who want to engage with Māori content and students, a common question is, 'how?'. What are the most effective, practical teaching strategies and approaches available?

This booklet shares the findings of research into the strategies and approaches used by non-Māori academics who are effective teachers of Māori content and students at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. Through interviews with these teachers we have identified several effective teaching strategies and approaches that could be transferable into other contexts. While we are not claiming that this resource represents an exhaustive compendium of all the best strategies for teaching Māori content and students, we are confident that interested readers will find some nuggets of useful ideas in this booklet to try in their own teaching.

MANU AO
Academy

TOIHUAREWA
Victoria University of Wellington

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI

VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT
Te Kōtuinga Mātauranga

Why teach Māori content?

No other country in the world has the specific cultural background and history that New Zealand does. As a consequence, tertiary institutions in New Zealand have inherited a distinct set of Māori-related obligations and strategic goals.

Appropriate inclusion of Māori content contributes to a dynamic and diverse environment that reflects Victoria University's unique position in Aotearoa New Zealand. In the past, it was possible to relegate the duty of offering Māori content to specialist departments, but today we recognise that Māori content has a place in virtually all university courses and subjects.

'I think the English term "obligation" doesn't quite capture it, but it doesn't make sense to ignore it, it's irresponsible to ignore it, it's got to be part of the terrain, it is part of the terrain. We do it with certainty that it's the right thing to do, but we leave it open-ended. So there's space for the students to bring their own knowledge in.'

Victoria University of Wellington's commitment

Victoria University of Wellington has pledged, in many of its current strategy documents, to support the recruitment, retention, and success of Māori students. Its Treaty of Waitangi Statute dedicates a university-wide commitment to:

⊞ 'increasing the capability of all staff to engage with Māori interests'; and

⊞ honouring the Treaty-based 'Principles of Equality and Reasonable Cooperation' in the university's provision of 'courses of study or training' (Victoria University of Wellington Treaty of Waitangi Statute: 3).

These commitments, obligations, and relationships combine to require incorporation of Māori content in courses offered at Victoria.
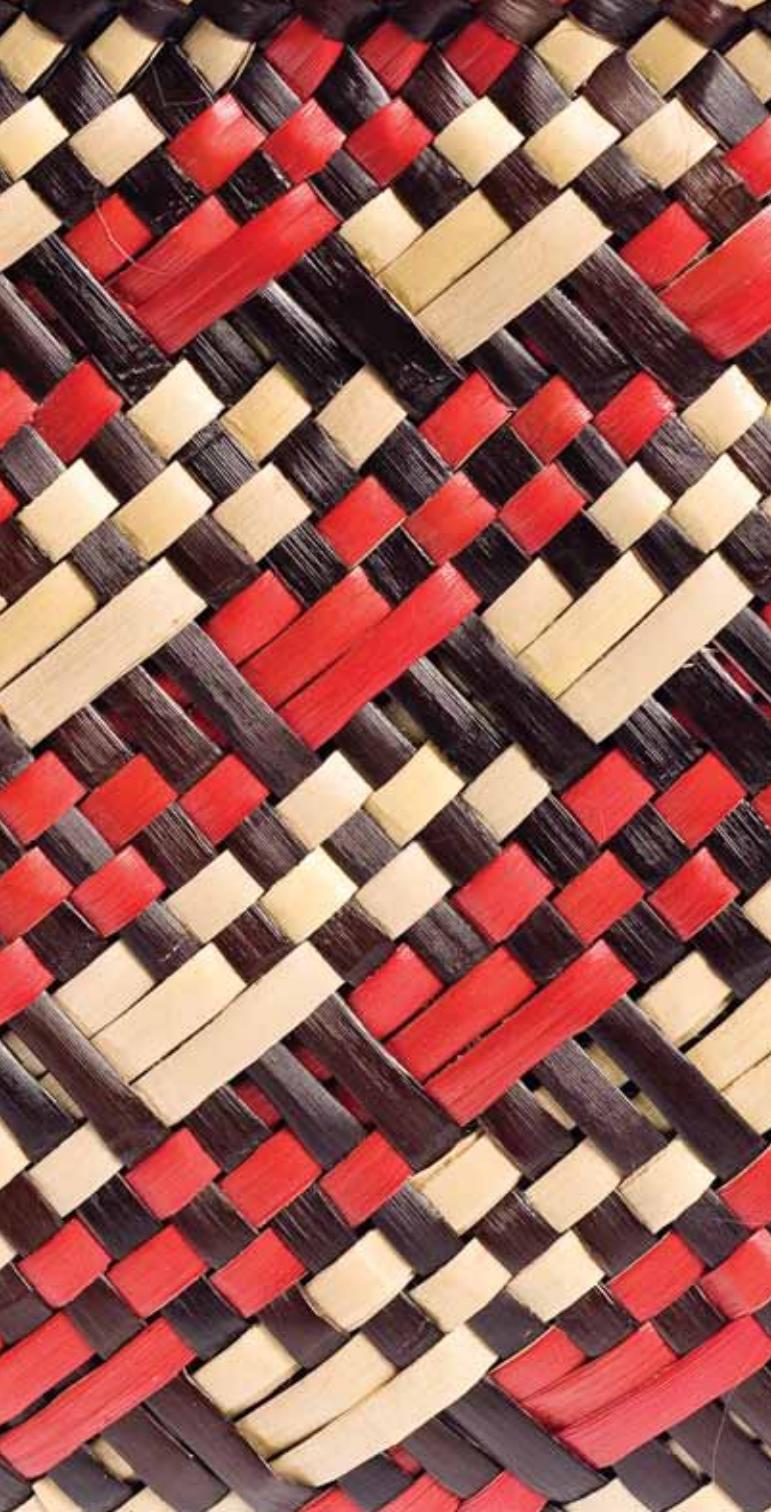
Excerpts from other Victoria University governance documents

Acknowledge and demonstrate the value of mātauranga Māori to scholarship across disciplines.
Learning and Teaching Strategy 2010–2014:11

....

Objective 1: Improve the recruitment, retention and success rates of students in the identified equity groups (ie, Māori, Pacific, people with disabilities, under-represented genders, people with socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds).
Equity and Diversity Strategy 2010–2014:11

....

Victoria is committed to:
- *Māori student recruitment, retention, and achievement*
- *The contribution of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) to scholarship across disciplines*
- *The contribution of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori to the culture of Victoria.*

Victoria University of Wellington Strategic Plan 2009–2014:5

....

Recognise the different learning needs of students by using a variety of teaching approaches and showing sensitivity to cultural issues.
Victoria University of Wellington Strategic Plan 2009–2014:7

....

Increasing the number of Māori and Pasifika students and students with disabilities achieving success at higher levels. Provide an inclusive and representative environment for staff and students that is conducive to equity of opportunity for participation and success.
Victoria University of Wellington Investment Plan 2011–2013:4,22

....

Tertiary Education Commission focus

Victoria University is not alone in setting high-level objectives around Māori student engagement and achievement. On a national scale, the New Zealand Tertiary Education Strategy 2010–2014 calls for tertiary providers to 'improve progression to, and achievement at, higher levels' for Māori students (Tertiary Education Strategy, 2010:12). In the strategy, Māori students are identified as one of only five priority groups that will receive special attention from the Tertiary Education Commission over the next five years, a testament to how critical they perceive Māori achievement to be in terms of higher educational success in New Zealand (Tertiary Education Strategy, 2010:11–13).

Research literature

Recent research also reinforces the link between culturally-responsive teaching practice and Māori student achievement. For example, evidence suggests that when teachers form positive relationships with their Māori students it supports the achievement of those students, helps them to grow in confidence, and fosters their motivation to study (Bishop et al., 2007; Earle, 2008; Hawk, Cowley, Hill, & Sutherland, 2001; Klinger & Wache, 2009; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009; Martin & Dowson, 2009; May, 2009; Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009; White, Oxenham, Tahana, Williams, & Matthews, 2009). A link has also been found between students with a strong sense of Māori cultural identity and students who achieve academic success (Bishop et al., 2007; May, 2009; Gavala & Flett, 2008; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009).

Retention of Māori students can also be affected by how comfortable and supported they feel, as Māori, in the tertiary education context. New Zealand-based research has suggested that student retention is improved when teachers become involved with their students' learning communities (Zepke & Leach, 2005:6), and that the retention and academic success of 'minority students' is positively impacted when the 'content, teaching methods and assessment . . . reflect the diversity of people enrolled in the course' (ibid, 2005:10).

Challenges and barriers

Some lecturers may feel uncomfortable about including Māori content and find it challenging to incorporate unfamiliar subject matter. Some may worry about their lack of knowledge about, or experience with, the content. They may be concerned about specific aspects of the teaching, such as pronouncing words correctly or addressing any negative reactions from their students, their colleagues, or people in the Māori community.

A number of non-Māori lecturers, though, have found constructive and successful ways to include Māori content. They have created learning environments in which they and their students feel safe and supported, while incorporating a range of Māori content that is relevant to their particular subject or course.
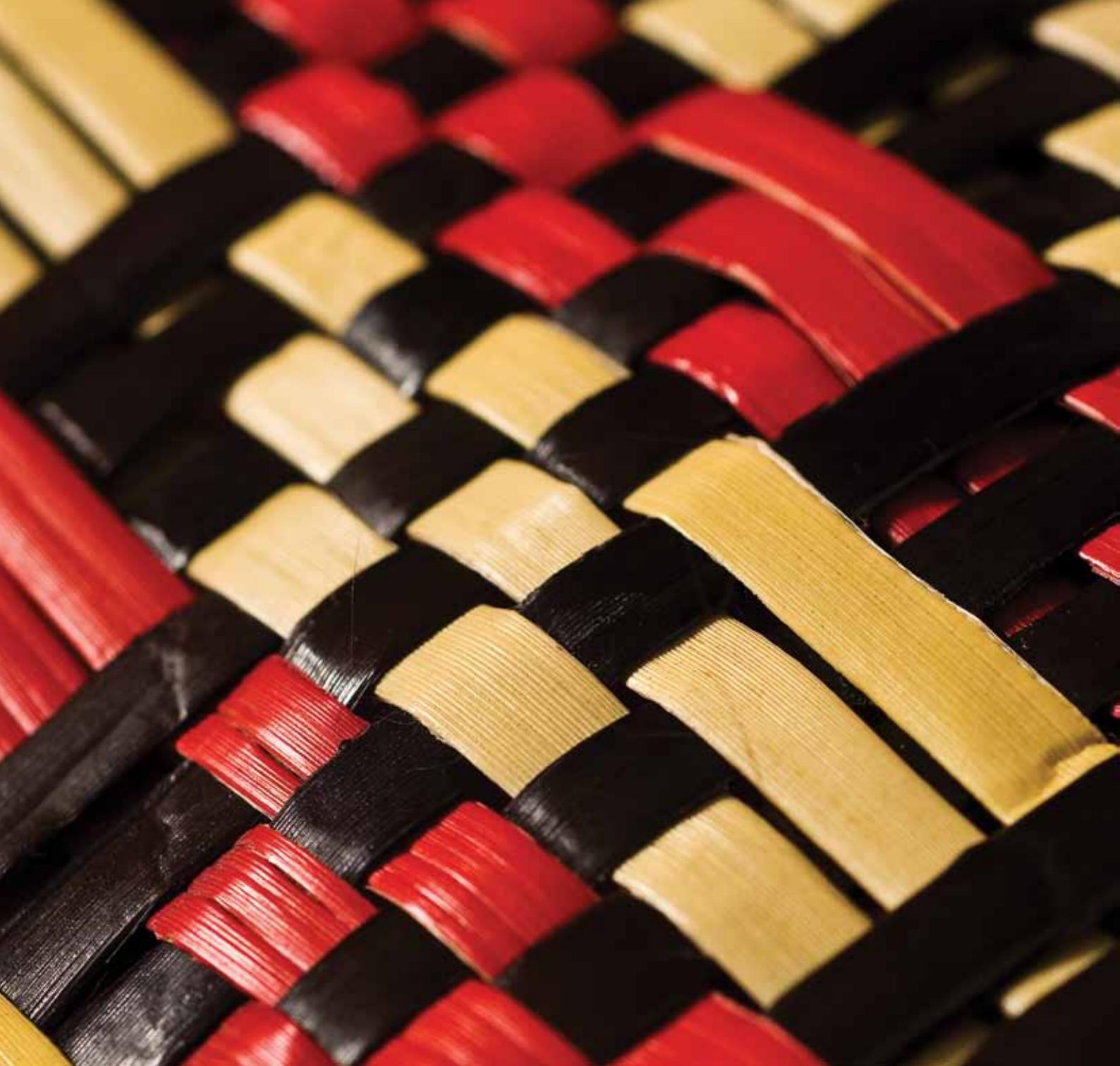
How to teach Māori content

What is Māori content?

The term 'Māori content' can mean different things to different people. The interviewees who contributed to this project defined it in a range of ways, which included anything to do with Māori people, history, practices, perspectives, language, and current issues. Most interviewees also thought the term included information about the Treaty of Waitangi and acknowledging Māori as one of the two Treaty partners. In this booklet, the term 'Māori content' is interpreted quite broadly, and its incorporation is considered to benefit not only Māori students, but all students.

As noted earlier, the suggestions which follow have been drawn from a set of interviews undertaken with academic teaching staff at Victoria University of Wellington. The interview transcripts were reviewed for effective and transferable strategies. Particular attention was given to those grounded in what is regarded as rigorous scholarly practice, as outlined by Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff in their work S*cholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate* (1997). The strategies and ideas have been ordered thematically in this booklet to align with each of Glassick et al's scholarly standards: clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, effective presentation, significant results, and reflective critique. The following sections of this booklet will address each of these standards in turn.

1. Clear goals

It is vital to set clear and achievable goals or learning objectives when teaching any course, and the same applies to the successful incorporation of Māori course content. The goals you set will guide how you teach and assess your students and will also influence how your students engage with your course.

When thinking about the appropriate learning objectives for your course, ask yourself, 'How could I provide opportunities for Māori perspectives to be incorporated into my course?' and 'What Māori skills development or knowledge could I build into my course that would benefit my students?'

Some of the factors that may influence how you choose to incorporate Māori content include:

⊞ your motivations;

⊞ how you select content for your course; and

⊞ how you design your course learning objectives.

Motivations

Your reasons for including Māori content in your courses may vary. They may be intrinsic motivations, such as your personal commitment to learning or promoting te reo Māori, or extrinsic motivations, such as university policies. Either way, incorporating Māori content need not be a burden.

'I mean, I don't make it about obligation in an onerous way and I try not to project it to the students as an onerous obligation'.

For some lecturers, their motivation comes from their belief in the relevance of Māori culture, given the geographical location of their institution.

'For me it's to do with positioning the fact that I'm teaching in Aotearoa, and living in Aotearoa … you're not living anywhere else in the world; this is where you're based.'

....

'Whatever content I teach I'm thinking about it in terms of, I guess, a Māori perspective on it'.

....

Other lecturers have found it motivating to think about how Māori content can fit into the 'big picture' or worldwide context. For example, they may introduce new concepts or ideas by way of a discussion about contemporary Māori-related issues or media coverage.

Others consider it important to incorporate the Treaty of Waitangi and its implications for their students. This motivates them to consider Māori perspectives on the Treaty and to provide opportunities for their students to consider these issues.

Some 'university-mandated' motivations can be found in the provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi Statute and in some of the objectives in the University's Strategic Plan 2009–2014, Learning and Teaching Strategy 2010–2014, and Equity and Diversity Strategy 2010–2014. As you consider these governance documents, think about your role as a staff member and teacher. In what ways does your course enact the principles and goals embodied in these university documents?

Selecting Māori content

There are many ways that you can consider possible Māori content in light of the general goals for your course. You can start by consulting with colleagues or other experts about what might be the most relevant Māori content for you to include. Many non-Māori lecturers found it useful to seek advice from Māori colleagues or community members.

'It's more about listening to their stories from the past, about what really matters to Māori, what are some of the changing challenges, some of the hopes, some of the dreams. So, having that kind of an understanding helps you bring in that material to your course.'

....

It may help to think about how your course could support inclusive and reciprocal teaching and learning practice. A recent Ako Aotearoa publication, *Hei Tauira*, suggested working with students to co-construct course goals as a demonstration of a form of 'rangatiratanga' (2009:3)—and this concept of rangatiratanga is also supported in the Māori Tertiary Education Framework (2009:15). Co-constructing course goals is an innovative learning and teaching activity and it is also an opportunity to incorporate a Māori concept into the curriculum. It may not be entirely practical in, for example, large first-year courses, but there may be other ways to introduce this concept into your course.

It may be useful to think about the diversity of your student cohort when you are planning your course. How can you acknowledge or build on their existing knowledge and experience with Māori content or about Māori people?

'I always use that whakataukī, "Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou" because I think that we all do bring our experience and understanding.'

....

Setting learning objectives

Consider the possibility of including Māori content in ways that support the existing teaching and learning objectives for your course. Is there a Māori case study or example that you can use to demonstrate a key theory or concept? Is there a Māori-related project that your students can do that will help them to develop a skill identified in your course's learning objectives?

If there is a section of your course that lends itself to the incorporation of significant Māori content, you may want to consider adding a content-related course learning objective. You may also want to consider designing an assessment activity to test your students' achievement in this area.

'So, you can get a feel for it from the discussion, but of course you don't hear every student, or see every student speak. You get some through their essays and that, because all the written overviews and the presentation essays are all tied to learning outcomes.'

Decide how and when you will know whether your students have met the various learning goals. Sometimes you may be able to judge this in an ongoing manner as you teach the course, but at other times you may need to set assignments so that your students can demonstrate their abilities. If you include Māori content in the formal assessment in your course, it signals to your students that this is not just a 'token gesture' and it encourages them to value the content too.

2. Adequate preparation

It is important that you feel comfortable and well prepared before you set out to teach any new material in your course. You may be nervous about the very idea of teaching Māori content, especially if you are non-Māori. ('Will I misrepresent the content? Will my colleagues or my students think I am just doing it to be 'politically correct'? Will I do it wrong?').

Perhaps the most important way to prepare yourself is to recognise and admit to yourself the things you don't know. State your position honestly. Don't try to give a 'Māori' point of view if you are not Māori.

'I don't position myself as an expert. I say "This is part of a journey for me. I'm learning about this."'

Preparing to teach Māori content can also include:

⊞ talking with colleagues and community experts;

⊞ seeking further training; and

⊞ reviewing what you know and engaging in research.

Talking with colleagues and community experts

If possible, try taking a team approach to teaching Māori content. Colleagues can often help by guest lecturing or co-teaching with you—or even just by providing ideas, mentoring, and support. You may have a Māori colleague who is better positioned to cover certain topics, or can advise you about where to go for help. It is really important that you have, or build up, a strong and trusting working relationship with the people who help you in this way. If you decide you need to call on someone you do not know very well, or someone who does not know your class, it can be important to meet up beforehand.

'I have to look at my networks in terms of who is working in the field, who is involved in the field right now, who is best at communicating confidently to a group of students that are at Stage 3.'

Mentoring is great for students, but don't forget that it can be great for teachers and academics too. Many lecturers feel more comfortable if they have a mentor they can turn to who is an expert in that specific field of Māori content. This can help you to become more confident with the content you have to teach, or even just more confident about your own appropriateness to teach it.

'I talk with my mentor, who's not necessarily my manager or anybody, but someone I talk to about how I think things are going with Māori content.'

'I was taught by the best.'

Seeking further training

It may be appropriate for you to undertake some training to help you teach the Māori content in your course. This could mean focusing on your teaching skills generally—for example, through accessing training offered by the Centre for Academic Development, the Centre for Lifelong Learning, or via other courses outside the institution. Or it could mean doing some extra training that relates to the actual Māori content that you want to teach. Is there a course within your own programme that focuses on Māori perspectives that may be useful to you? Are there any courses at Te Kawa a Māui, the School of Māori Studies, which could help you? One example is learning the basics of the Māori language—this can be useful in many courses.

'I felt more confident after I took MAOR 101 … '

The *Hei Tauira* publication notes that Pākehā staff who undertake training in Māori language and cultural practices are 'valued particularly for their commitment to Māori perspectives and their willingness to continue to learn' (Greenwood & Te Aika, 2009:7).

Reviewing what you know and engaging in research

It may be useful to start your planning by reviewing what Māori content you already know or have taught before. You may not need to find new information or learn new skills every time. Sometimes it may be sufficient to revisit or refresh learning you have already done.

'So if I am going to lecture on Māori content … I have a few sources that I read and re-read. Also, if I'm talking about whakapapa I keep going back to check that I understand what it is!'

If you find that you do have gaps in your knowledge and expertise, take a scholarly approach to researching the relevant Māori content that will fill in those gaps. You may need to build up your own lists of resources or literature relating to Māori content for your course. You can add to these throughout your teaching career and return to them whenever you need to. Cast your net wide!

'Reading, conversations with colleagues, professional development—putting yourself in different places with new people.'

....

'I'm always on the lookout for new resources, whether it's through the National Library or sometimes you just hear about it on the radio. So I'm just always keeping my ears and eyes open to find new resources'

....

When Māori content has been fully integrated into your courses, the programme itself can become a highly relevant resource. Some lecturers have been able to develop the Māori dimensions of their courses into research and teaching specialisations.

'So I like to think that because it's something that's a normal part of my practice now, it's not something that's an add-on, so it's integral to the way I am and how I teach. It's not like "Oh my God! I've got to find some Māori content!".'

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3. Appropriate methods

Key to the effective teaching of Māori content is the way that the content is actually delivered. We know from ample research that the demeanour and enthusiasm of the lecturer affects the way students engage with a course (Patrick, Hisley, & Kempler, 2000; Ramsden, 2003). Similarly, it stands to reason that the way teachers approach the delivery of Māori course content will impact on how positively the students receive it.

Appropriate methods for delivering Māori content can include:

⊞ acknowledging context;

⊞ co-teaching and inviting guest lecturers;

⊞ engaging in comparative analysis;

⊞ using Māori examples;

⊞ using Māori language and concepts;

⊞ modelling tikanga Māori; and

⊞ taking a three-tiered approach to organising Māori content.

Acknowledging context

One of the reservations that some non-Māori (and even some Māori) lecturers express about teaching Māori content is that they lack the cultural credibility to do it with authority. This can mean that people avoid Māori content altogether or include it only in a minimal way in order to avoid any criticism. A positive approach is to explain your context to your students and use it as a learning opportunity, for you and for your students.

'I position myself as a Pākehā within this country and I always start with my whakapapa [genealogy] and my pepeha [personal introduction] and I model doing that in te reo Māori and not necessarily doing it very well, in terms of pronunciation, but I am doing it, and I unpack why that is, I don't just do it and leave it like that.'

....

Co-teaching and inviting guest lecturers

One of the simplest ways to incorporate Māori content is to invite experts (Māori or non-Māori) to come and talk with, and teach, your students. This could take the form of a guest lecture, especially if it's about a topic that you are very unfamiliar with, or it could involve a co-teaching situation, whereby you co-present with the other person and share the teaching.

'I thought it was really good when we had Māori/ Pākehā teams teaching the Treaty. And I think that it was a really, really good model because I think it really enabled Pākehā students to get that they could see Pākehā people not being threatened and defensive about it, and they could make some connections, and I also think it was good safety-wise, for students and for lecturers …'

'I always bring in the experts, the Māori experts …'

The benefits of this approach are obvious—you have a mechanism for including Māori content in your course without having to be solely responsible for its delivery. However, be warned that there are some downsides to this approach. Many of your Māori academic colleagues will be regularly called on, from all parts of the University, for this kind of teaching and it can be a significant drain on their time and energy, with potentially negative effects on their own research and teaching programmes.

If you decide that you do want to explore guest lecturing or co-teaching options, it would pay to think about how you can reciprocate to your Māori colleagues—what can you offer them in return? You are also far more likely to attract someone into a co-teaching or guest-lecturing role if you have already developed a collegial relationship with that person—rather than just 'cold calling' them and expecting them to be of assistance.

Use of Māori examples

The most obvious way to incorporate Māori content is to choose Māori examples to use in your teaching. This may be easier to do in some subjects than others but, if you are committed to incorporating Māori content, it is possible to come up with examples for just about any topic.

'We have the field trip. The first field trip we take … is to our own marae here [at Victoria University of Wellington], so the students get to see again that kind of institutional relationship. But, also, the pedagogical purpose of going to Te Tumu Herenga Waka is to show how history isn't always in books, it can be in other media and in fact that's the kind of longer history; the recorded history in Polynesia is in visual forms, but that those visual forms require literacy and we've lost a lot of the knowledge that's required to read it.'

The examples may be embedded in the course topic. In a course with an historical focus, it should be easy enough to find a Māori historical event or person that demonstrates the key point you want to make. However, for other subjects, it might be that you choose a Māori-related scenario or use Māori data in an activity that ordinarily might not have included Māori content. For example, in a numerically orientated course, you could set a problem that requires students to calculate the rates of Māori language usage in a region, to study Māori demographics, or to analyse the performance of a Māori business.

'Role-plays and drama exercises can be great activities to get students to put themselves in other people's shoes'

Comparative analysis

Comparative analysis was one of the most common techniques (used by almost all of the interviewees) for teaching and assessment. For some of the teachers, it was a way to get the students to 'reflect on [their] story' and to 'try and get a perspective on [their] story by looking at somebody else'. They would ask the students to consider an issue, event, or concept from their own perspective and then ask them to identify what some of the different Māori perspectives on that topic might be.

'When we're doing the comparative histories of Polynesia, we do a module on the concept of renaissance, and of course the Māori renaissance is so important, and that's a really key lecture. But we have readings in that course as well, by Peter Buck. Looking at him as an ancestor of Pacific Studies, an intellectual ancestor. We look at his readings in the first week, and then we go to the marae and the students see the tekoteko with him and his bowler hat and bow tie!'

Comparative analysis can go further than exploring the mainstream or orthodox literature on a topic. Some teachers consider whether there is equivalent Māori, or possibly indigenous, literature on that topic as well, and explore both.

'And just from an academic point of view it's quite a challenging assignment. They're looking in all the right places for their sources. They're understanding that, "I can't write about a Māori topic and not consult Māori writers". That there's a problem with only citing Pākehā sources, for Pacific as well as for Māori, but they're not completely ignoring the Pākehā sources, they're trying to be judicious and careful about what they select.'

Use of Māori language and concepts

Another simple way to incorporate Māori content into any course, regardless of its topic or focus, is through the use of common Māori language terms and concepts. Again, our geographic location in New Zealand gives you ample justification for greeting your students at the start of each class in te reo Māori. A casual kia ora or more formal tēnā koutou takes a couple of seconds to say but it does have an impact on your students. It's a small gesture but is an easy way to start, and as your confidence grows you can introduce other words and phrases, such as farewells like ka kite ('see you again') and enquiries of well-being like kei te pēhea koutou? ('how are you all?'), or you can choose to use Māori alternatives for common English terms, like discussing the kaupapa of your course, instead of calling them themes.

'It's in terms of language, so often, whether it's part of the string of Pacific greetings that we use in the beginning, or when I'm lecturing trying to make things in the Pacific seem familiar to a New Zealand context.'

'And we call that our "whakapapa" so we use the term whakapapa and we talk about where Pacific Studies came from—the layers of history and intellectual tradition that built Pacific Studies.'

Modelling 'tikanga Māori'

It is not always about incorporating subject-specific course content. Another option is to incorporate or model tikanga Māori (Māori customary practices) in your course. For example, a central tenet of Māori cultural practice is the concept of manaakitanga (hospitality). You could model this concept, not just as a topic of study but as a way to acknowledge the contribution of others, for example, in the way that guest lecturers are greeted and thanked by the class, or in how you choose to demonstrate your gratitude for student contributions.

'They have to prepare themselves, so I say to them "You're the host, for this guest lecturer, and I'm not gonna tell you what it means to host people. You figure out what it means to host people". So, some students give gifts, some students didn't give gifts but were so warm and friendly. So they figure out as a group what it means to host. Some people make sure their guest had a glass of water or a drink, a bottle of water or something. Others forgot that part but picked up something else.'

Other tikanga that you could model or advocate in your courses include such things as sharing kai (food), not sitting on tables, having mihimihi (introductions) at the start of the course, and ending the course with a poroporoaki (an opportunity for students to farewell and thank each other).

Three-tiered approach to organising content

Another idea developed by some of the interviewees was a model for introducing significant Māori content into a course where it was possible (or even likely) to meet resistance from students (and sometimes even peers). The model suggests a three-tiered approach to introducing the content, ideally over three successive lectures.

The first lecture introduces the central concept or idea from a global perspective. The lecturers found that, generally speaking, this was acceptable to most students and was consistent with their experiences of the increasing internationalisation of higher education—the goal of producing graduates who are 'global citizens'.

The second lecture in the series starts to delve into New Zealand's bicultural context. It still references the multi-cultural context introduced in the first lecture but it also starts to hone in on the specifics of the New Zealand context.

The third and final lecture in the series focuses almost exclusively on kaupapa Māori perspectives on the topic (Smith, 1999). It references Māori theorists and literature, considers Māori experiences and beliefs, and asks the students to interpret, understand, and critique Māori knowledge systems in a scholarly way.

The feedback from interviewees was that, in their experience, when they delivered a kaupapa Māori-based lecture using that three-tiered approach, their students were far less resistant and more likely to engage with the material. Easing them into the material in the first two lectures meant that the students were more open, more positive, and produced insightful work of a high quality.

' ... the first assignment, for example, is a world view of multi-ethnic education, so it comes from a very personal level, and so in this case you can see how students are understanding Māori, understanding Pacific or multiculturalism, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand'.

4. Effective presentation

An effective methodology for teaching Māori content must take into account the ways in which you present the content to your students. This involves:

- ⊞ how you communicate as a teacher in the lecture theatre;
- ⊞ other tools and resources used to present course content effectively; and
- ⊞ how you cope with 'tricky' situations.

We know already, from previous research, that the attitude a lecturer has towards the subject being taught 'rubs off' on students (Patrick, Hisley, & Kempler,2000; Ramsden, 2003). So, if you are bored by a topic, the chances are that many of your students will be bored by it too, whereas if you are passionate and enthusiastic about a topic, your students will pick up on that and get more engaged too.

'I think I convey to the students that fascination, and they can easily see my commitment to it—I've devoted my academic life to it. So they accept what I say because they perceive that I care. I also don't pretend to have a Māori viewpoint (so I don't pretend to be an insider), but I try very hard to present and show understanding of (and thus respect for) the Māori viewpoint ... even when it isn't my own.'

It makes sense then, that the levels of enthusiasm and interest with which you present your Māori course content will have an impact on your students. So, try to model for your students the kind of positive attitude that you want them to have towards learning Māori content.

'For me, it's about "wow!", about curiosity, about learning, about the wonders of discovery, so that's what I try and project to them.'

Communication

Many lecturers have succeeded in communicating their Māori content simply by engaging in active and responsive speaking, listening, and discussion. Your students may have a lot of new thoughts and ideas to deal with, so it will be helpful to them if their classroom environment is one where they feel able to ask questions. You are in a position to ensure they feel comfortable enough to do this. When you pay careful attention to your students as you teach, and get to know them as individuals, creating this kind of learning environment becomes easier and more intuitive.

'Eye contact, you get people nodding, you get the feedback from them that they are with you where you are taking them. I really look for that feedback from the class.'

Some students may have Māori perspectives or knowledge that could benefit the rest of the class, or there may be a controversial Māori topic (with no one right answer) that you can use to generate interactive discussion and critical thinking.

' ... it's about having a conversation and being able to rationalise, and getting a sense of what the perspectives are'.

Some lecturers use narratives to communicate Māori content in ways that are meaningful or engaging for the students.

'I think anecdotes are really important for bringing it into the real world. So I have a fund of good stories; they're often personal stories because I think, (a), that's what you know but, (b), that kind of makes it real to the students.'

....

One of the most useful things you can do is to show your students why you think the Māori content in your course is meaningful and relevant. Project a positive and confident attitude, and don't forget your sense of humour!

'I think a lot of the success of what I do is due to my communication of my attitude.'

....

Other tools and resources

There are a range of different resources and teaching methods appropriate for conveying Māori content. For example, lecturers have used guest speakers, books, videos, storytelling, and images as well as debates, discussions, field trips, and oral recordings.

The physical space in which students learn can itself be a resource that enhances their learning experience. Can you expose your students to different Māori environments and opinions within the context of your course? For example, some lecturers have taken their classes on marae visits, to Matiu Somes Island, to community venues, and to sites of significant Māori events.

You may choose to designate a specific section of your course to Māori content. Even if this is your main strategy, it can help your students if you include relevant Māori content and contexts throughout your lectures and tutorials. The Māori content will be more effective if it is not just an isolated section.

'I try to make sure that there is a visual Māori element there on the PowerPoints.'

....

'I always use some sort of thought or proverb or whakataukī at the beginning of everything I do and it is usually Māori but not necessarily. But I talk about why I do that and I unpack why I see a whakataukī as being important.'

....

Coping with tricky situations

There are always challenges in teaching a course at university, and this can be particularly true when teaching Māori content: 'certainly students do get very defensive and uptight at times'. Our interviewees shared several strategies for dealing with various tricky situations in the classroom.

Get your students to talk the issue through as a class.

'That slight negativity, you always throw it back to the class and then you see who in the class is at a level where they can be quite challenging to that negativity … I'll just say "Let's ask the question to the class". Or give it to them in another example and then see if they can analyse it from that perspective.'

....

'I think, if they're talking about it, then they're thinking about it, and that's good in itself.'

....

'I wouldn't feel comfortable trying to ... do kaupapa Māori things ... partly because I don't know enough. But you know I'm always open to students bringing things in, and I find that Māori students often do bring methods or bring their own knowledge in.'

....

'And right at the outset I say, "This is going to be a difficult, controversial topic. I'm going to give you the pros and cons as I see them. You don't have to agree with me".'

....

Rely on your support teams. It can be particularly useful to have Māori and Pākehā colleagues to turn to for advice or help.

'We'd meet at the marae for half a day and we'd look at an area of professional development in terms of teaching and in terms of understanding Māori process and also bicultural ... '

....

Get to know your students. Having a strong relationship with your students from the beginning will help you to decide on the best course of action in difficult situations.

'It's [about] understanding who your students are, it's paying attention to them, it's giving them respect. They have a hell of a lot of mana!'

....

'To me it's about the relationship you've got with your students and how you do it. If they have respect for you, if they can see that you're passionate about it.'

....

Have a sense of humour. Getting uptight or defensive about an issue isn't going to give your students faith in your teaching abilities. Being relaxed about it will encourage your students to be less defensive themselves.

'It's an invitation for them to participate as well, and it's sort of like opening up conversations.'

....

'I believe that you want students to approach learning with openness and if you drag them to it, it doesn't work.'

....

Don't forget all the other support staff that can make themselves available for you and your students. Can you set up specialised tutorials or mentoring for your students?

....

'I have a strong student services support team around my courses. All the students get to meet Pacific and Māori advisors early on in the course and they're for everybody, they're not just for Māori and Pacific students, and so they know that I don't want them to fail. No teacher should ever want their student to fail.'

....

Plan some extra 'space' into your lecture plans, in case there is an issue that needs discussion or explanation time.

Try to focus on the positive.

'I don't just focus on the problem ... I look at the strengths of what your teaching is about, the strengths of the students, the strengths of the course itself.'

....

5. Significant results

According to Glassick et al's writing about scholarly standards, one measure of scholarship is whether your work is able to produce any significant results. Assessing the 'results' of teaching Māori content can be a little difficult. In some courses the content is assessed, so we can draw on student grades to see whether the teaching of the content is 'successful'. However, in many cases the content is integrated in such a way that it is difficult to differentiate student 'results'. In any case, it is arguable whether student grades or marks are the best measure of impact in this context.

When we spoke to the interviewees about how they gauge whether their students have engaged with, and understood, the Māori content sufficiently, they gave us a range of examples as evidence of its impact on students. Most of them talked about the atmosphere in the classroom, the ability and attitudes of the students when they engaged in class discussions or submitted written work, and the changes that they noticed in the students between the start of the course and the end.

' … and you can see that they've really had an experience, that they were present … '

' … reaching any level of understanding of the Māori content was a kind of success … '

6. Reflective critique

Reflective critique means holding up your practice to a critical eye—your own, a colleague's, your students', or someone with special expertise. When you know what is working and what isn't, you can plan for continuous improvement. There are a number of ways you can critically reflect on your teaching of Māori content, including:

⊞ self-assessment;

⊞ feedback from colleagues and students; and

⊞ feedback from Māori.

Self-assessment

You can improve your teaching of Māori content by reflecting on your own teaching practice as you teach your course. Many of the interviewees talked about writing ideas and comments alongside their lecture notes as they taught, noting how the class reacted to the content, recording any curly questions they got asked, or identifying issues they would like to address another time.

'I'm in the habit when I come out of the lecture of scribbling myself notes of all the things that didn't work.'

'I will often try and revisit my lectures if they're pre-written, and so I will try and add in things that I know will challenge their thinking, that will challenge their knowledge bases and really it's getting a sense of who your students are … '

It can also be useful to write about the way you yourself felt as you taught specific Māori content—especially if this content was new to you or your course. How confident were you in the classroom? Did you feel prepared and supported enough? Perhaps the Māori perspectives that are part of the content are as new to you as they are to your students. It is okay to feel a bit lost sometimes, provided you recognise this feeling, reflect on it, and seek further support or information before presenting this content again.

Feedback from colleagues and students

It can be helpful to go through a structured review process at the beginning and end of each course—this could include going through the Centre for Academic Development feedback forms or using other feedback forms devised by you or colleagues in your programme. If the Māori content is a new addition to your course, you may want to pay special attention to its quality, relevance, and presentation.

'At the end of each course we have a meeting of all the staff who've been involved in the course and from the [Centre for Academic Development] we have all the comments so we go through quite carefully.'

This kind of reflection should also be an essential part of your course planning and monitoring process. For example, perhaps some content wasn't as well absorbed by your students as you would have liked. Before you teach the course the following year, brainstorm possible teaching strategies with one or more colleagues, and consider any modifications you could make to the course. There may also be certain aspects of the course that were really successful—make sure to note what went well and plan to repeat if possible!

'Me and a colleague look at, for future planning for the next year, about what I can modify in terms of assessments obviously.'

Feedback from Māori

By being open to feedback from Māori about your inclusion of Māori content, you will undoubtedly benefit, as will your course and your students. Seeking out, and listening to, the opinion of Māori colleagues, friends, experts, and students can give you valuable insights into Māori perspectives on this content. Having a 'Māori eye' on what you are doing can also help you to feel more secure and supported as you teach Māori content.

'I'd be quite happy if someone looked at our courses and said "Oh, that source is not good," or "That doesn't seem like a Māori-friendly way of doing things, why don't you do it this way?". So I wouldn't mind that happening, I think it'd be good to have some discussion around whether we're doing things in the best possible way.'

Conclusion

There is no one way to teach Māori content in a mainstream university course. Each of the interviewees has developed their own style and approach, and their methods may not all work for you. However, without fail, one of the key themes that came out of every interview was a commitment to keep trying to incorporate Māori content into their courses in ways that are appropriate, relevant and inclusive. All of the people who informed this document were aware of the privileged positions they hold as university teachers and of the influence they have on the students whom they teach.

'You model what you want to see from them … '
....

By Meegan Hall and Krissi Jerram

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