REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM

FOR SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 1

To The University of the South Pacific

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SECTION I

OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of the Institution and Visit

The University of the South Pacific (USP), a multi-state sponsored institution, is a major provider of higher education in the Pacific and is situated in a region of physical, social, cultural, economic and national diversity. The university was established in 1968 (it will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2018) and is one of three regional universities in the world. It is jointly owned by the governments of 12 countries, namely: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The USP region spreads across 33 million square kilometers of ocean, an area more than three times the size of the United States. By contrast, the total land mass is about equal to the area of twice the size of the U.S. state of Massachusetts. Populations are modest and vary in size, ranging from Tokelau with 1,160 people, to Fiji with 867,000 people. The university has 14 campuses and 10 centers across the 12 member countries, with the main campus, the Laucala Campus, in Suva, Fiji. There are two campuses outside Suva offering 50% or more of a degree program: the Alafua Campus in Samoa, and the Emalus Campus in Vanuatu. The central administration of the university is located at the Laucala Campus.

The university is governed by its own Council, with the Senate being the academic authority of the university. The vice-chancellor and president (VC&P) has overall authority and responsibility for the direction of the university and is accountable to the University Council.

The university's vision and mission are aligned with its vision of "achieving excellence and innovation for sustainable development of the Pacific Island Countries." Its mission is to: 1) provide Pacific people with a comprehensive range of excellent and relevant tertiary qualifications; 2) deliver the benefits of advanced research and its applications; 3) provide communities and countries in the Pacific region with relevant, cost-effective and sustainable solutions, including entrepreneurship, to their main challenges; and 4) be an exemplar of tertiary education for the Pacific Islands in quality, governance, application of technology and collaboration with national tertiary institutions.

The university's mission, vision and values inform its strategic plan, with the current plan operational from 2013 to 2018. The university can be classified as a state-sponsored institution, with a combination of funding from member countries (20%), student tuition fees (37%), developmental assistance from Australia and New Zealand (24%), trading activities (9%), and other income sources (10%) (USP Annual Plan 2017).

The academic sections of the university consists of three faculties/colleges, which house a total of 17 Schools, 6 Institutes and 3 Centres; Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCe-SD); and Pacific TAFE (Pacific Technical and Further Education). The faculties/colleges, namely the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE), the Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE), and the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment (FSTE), are led by deans, which are comparable to deans of colleges at U.S. universities. The faculties/colleges are responsible for offering all undergraduate and graduate degrees (USP refers to graduate programs as

postgraduate) and non-degree credit-bearing programs. Additional postgraduate

programs in Climate Change and Sustainable Development are offered by the university

through PaCE-SD. The university also offers pre-degree programs, particularly skills-

based qualifications, and foundation and preliminary studies through Pacific TAFE.

Programs and courses are offered in various modes, namely, face-to-face, blended, online

and print, onsite and at a distance.

The university has a current enrollment headcount of 27,642 students, including

15,638 undergraduates, 8,938 pre-degree students, and 2,801 graduate students.

The university currently employs approximately 1,617 full-time staff distributed

across all campuses. There are 670 senior academic staff/faculty and professional staff

(formerly known at USP as comparable staff); 657 intermediate and junior; and 290

hourly paid staff members. Within the senior staff ranks, there are 425 academic

staff/faculty and 245 professional staff.

The university offers 23 Bachelors, 11 Masters and 1 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

degree programs through its three faculties/colleges and PaCE-SD. The university also

offers non-degree programs that bear academic results such as Certificates, Diplomas,

Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas, and Graduate Certificates in a range of

disciplines.

Recent accreditation history. USP received a diagnostic visit in October 2014

and in December (2014) was invited to apply for eligibility. An application for eligibility

was submitted in June 2015, and in November 2015, the Eligibility Review Committee

(ERC) granted eligibility for five years through November 24, 2020. The Seeking

Accreditation Visit 1 (SAV1) occurred in April 2018.

Since granted eligibility, USP introduced seven new programs:

- Diploma in Pacific Vernacular Language (Cook Islands Maori)

- Postgraduate Diploma in Arts (Applied Linguistics & English Language Teaching)

- Postgraduate Diploma in Forensic Accounting and Fraud Investigation

- Postgraduate Diploma in Cybersecurity

- Graduate Certificate in Entrepreneurship

- Graduate Certificate in School Leadership

- Master of Arts (Applied Linguistics)

Off-Campus sites and distance education. As noted, the university has 14 campuses and 10 centers across the 12 member countries. The review team visit occurred on the main campus (Laucala Campus in Suva, Fiji) and one team member visited the Emalus Campus in Vanuatu. The review team also conducted a distance education review including program and course review, interviews with academic staff (faculty), non-academic staff, and administrators.

B. **The Institution's Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 Report**

Alignment with the Letter of Intent. USP viewed the review process as an opportunity to evaluate and enhance all aspects of the institution (governance and organizational structures, leadership, administrative and financial management, resources

and facilities, academic offerings (both onsite and offsite), and the coherence of programs and curricula, effectiveness of the institutional research process, and the overall quality assurance mechanisms). The Letter of Intent identified nine areas that needed to be addressed/improved in the near future: institutional data and institutional research; policies and procedures; staffing (especially of key leadership positions); curriculum review (with emphasis on curriculum mapping); assessment of student learning outcomes (especially for students nearing completion); distance education and flexible learning (ensuring full implementation of the new Flexible Learning Policy); professional development (design and implement a new professional development plan for academic staff/faculty that will drive the curriculum review plan and enhance the quality of assessment across the institution, maximizing online learning and assessment opportunities); student support (especially for first year online learners) and reviews of academic and non-academic sections (making documentation of responses to reviews centrally accessible and "closing the loop" in continuous improvement).

USP used a comprehensive approach in preparing the institutional report and for the SAV1, overseen by the accreditation liaison officer (ALO), who is the deputy vice-chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Services). In addition to holding workshops to promote awareness of the accreditation process, working groups representing different sections (Colleges) and campuses were organized for each accreditation standard, thus ensuring a "broad representation of university staff. "Road shows" and consultations were conducted at all USP regional campuses, except for two of the smaller ones, so that the report could accurately reflect the status of the regional campuses and the university as a whole. The working groups used gap analyses in relation to each standard and

Criteria for Review (CFR). These reports informed the WSCUC Steering Committee and provided an action plan to address any issues identified. Progress was regularly reported to the Teaching Quality Committee, the University Senate and Council. The university also conducted a mock SAV1 to further inform the preparation and write-up of the institutional report. The institutional report was consistent with the Letter of Intent.

Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report. Overall, the institutional report was well organized and with extensive use of links and attached evidence, was thoroughly prepared. USP clarified language where terms were unfamiliar to a typical U.S. reader. The report accurately portrayed the condition of the institution and had widespread involvement from students, academic staff and non-academic staff and from 10 of the 12 campus sites. It is unclear the extent to which academic staff were included in the discussion of issues and recommendations. The institution did address its compliance with the standards in a self-reflective manner and identified areas of strength and needed improvement. Overall, the evidence submitted for each standard and CFR was thorough and appropriate, thus contributing to a rigorous inquiry on the part of USP. The data and evidence supported the claims made by the university and led to a greater understanding of its effectiveness, systems of quality improvement and student learning.

C. Response to Issues Raised in the Eligibility Review Committee Letter

The Eligibility Action Letter identified three recommendations to USP involving two eligibility criteria (EC). Under EC 9, the recommendation was to develop a greater emphasis in the Annual Plan on education effectiveness outcomes (CFR 2.3, 2.6, and 4.6). In response, the university altered its annual planning process to integrate resource

plans and needs with outcomes and outputs with a focus on outcomes of achieving excellence. Results for each area related to student success are reported to the Teaching Quality Committee, University Senate, Executive Committee of the Council, and the Council. Related to EC11, the second recommendation was completion of a plan to bring coherence and alignment of learning design and outcomes (CFR 2.4, 2.10 and 4.1). In response, USP established a Curriculum Review and Development Plan, designed to enhance educational effectiveness outcomes and strengthen the coherence and alignment of learning design, outcomes and assessment at the university. The campus Annual Plan is used as a vehicle to achieve educational effectiveness outcomes. The third ERC recommendation also involved EC11; namely, the approval and implementation of the program review process (CFR 2.7). USP has developed a comprehensive five-year, cyclical External Programme Review Plan (2017-2021) of all its programs and is currently in the second cycle of these reviews covering six disciplines.

USP also identified several changes in key leadership positions, vacancies and impending hires. Notably, the term of the current vice-chancellor and president (VC&P) ends December 2018; the University Council expects to appoint a new VC&P in May 2018. The VC&P is expected to implement the University Strategic Plan (current plan also ends in December 2018) and the Council has approved a process and timeline for the completion of a new strategic plan. Other key positions currently vacant and being searched to fill are the Vice President of Administration (now advertised as VP Planning, Quality and Digital Services), Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics, the Heads of School for Land Management and Development, Economics, Management and Public Administration, Tourism and Hospitality Management, and Computing, Information and

Mathematical Sciences (total of 7 positions). Some of the campus directors were upgraded to pro vice-chancellor positions, with academic leadership and campus management responsibilities.

USP is also anticipating continued enrollment growth at a rate higher than planned (8% vs. 5%) plus the potential addition to USP of the Government of Papua New Guinea, which would also potentially result in a significant increase in enrollment due to Papua New Guinea's large population.

The university and the member countries are keenly aware of their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. USP recognizes that with a predicted increase in extreme weather events comes increased cost to the university from damage to its campuses and infrastructure; health issues associated with climate change; and climate-induced relocation due to sea level rise. USP has planned a new undergraduate program in public health and has named a pro vice-chancellor to lead its development. Finally, USP noted some political instability in the Pacific in the past, especially in Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, all of which are stable currently and experiencing good economic growth. Even in the presence of some past instability, no member country of USP has ever defaulted on payment to the university.

SECTION II

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH WSCUC'S STANDARDS

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional Purposes. USP is guided by its vision, mission, and values. The university is dedicated to the objective for which is was established for almost five decades:

"…maintenance, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge by teaching, consultancy, and research, and otherwise for the provision of appropriate levels of education and training responsive to the well-being and needs of the communities in the Pacific region" (The Charter of the University, 1970).

The university's vision and mission is aligned to its eleven values which are 1) Commitment and loyalty of staff and students to the institution and the region; 2) Highest standards of governance, leadership, academic freedom, integrity and transparency; 3) Highest standards of creativity, innovation, teamwork and flexibility in the pursuit of excellence; 4) Investments in staff, rewarding staff excellence, and empowerment of all USP teams; 5) Respect for distinctiveness and diversity in our Pacific heritage and its development, preservation and dissemination; 6) Commitment to regional cooperation and integration; 7) Positive and inclusive learning and living environments for student excellence; 8) Support for flexible learners in all locations for success in work, life and citizenship; 9) Protection and nurturing of the environment; 10) Strong relationships to guide engagement with national governments, Pacific communities, and development partners; and, 11) Humility in performance, learn from others, value the trust given, and honour Pacific knowledge, contexts and aspirations.

The 2013-2018 Strategic Plan supports the university's vision, mission, and values with seven priority areas: 1) Learning and Teaching; 2) Student Support; 3) Research and Internationalization; 4) Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); 5) Regional and Community Engagement; 6) Our People; and, 7) Governance, Management, Leadership and Continuous Improvement (CFR 1.1). The USP Annual Plan 2018 provided evidence of the

institutions' achievement of objectives supporting the key priorities in meeting financial goals, increased research publications, and increased enrollments (CFR 1.2).

The USP strategic planning processes are comprehensive and inclusive of key stakeholders. The USP Strategic Plan Provisional Update for 1st Quarter 2018 provides evidence of the university meeting clear educational objectives in several areas: 1) providing staff development for digital technologies; 2) converting 81% of courses to flexible modes; 3) mapping graduate outcomes that serve as USP's Institutional Learning Outcomes for undergraduate programs; and, 4) facilitating utilization of open source software for USP and the region. Data supports movement toward increasing undergraduate, postgraduate, Masters, and Ph.D. completion rates with clear strategies such as increase in scholarships, cohorts, and Flexi-Schools for students near completion. At the time of the WSCUC visit in April 2018, USP achieved 81% of the current 2013-2018 strategic plan's objectives and all objectives tied to budget allocations (CFR 1.2).

The Annual Plan for 2018 provided further evidence of alignment of the Strategic Plan and the university's vision and mission. The key priority of Learning and Teaching was supported by the university's new lecture capture systems (2017), distributed tablet computers to first year students (2017 & 2018), and an approved and fully-funded programme of online and flexible course conversions. In addition, the key priorities of Student Support, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Regional and Community Engagement were supported by the development of an early student warning system and online support, re-engineering and upgrading USPnet at all campuses to improve access to learning systems, planned construction

of the new Solomon Island campus, and continued work with member countries on climate change, oceans, and sustainable development (CFR 1.1, 1.5).

Educational Performance Indicators (EPI) supported student success in adequate course pass rates, first year retention rates, and 6-year cohort completion rates. Disaggregated data indicated that part-time students have lower course pass rates and significantly lower retention and completion rates. The university is aware of this discrepancy and is developing strategies to address the needs of part-time students (CFR 1.2, 1.8).

USP has established seven graduate outcomes and corresponding rubrics for 1) Communication; 2) Creativity; 3) Critical Thinking and Quantitative Reasoning, 4) Ethics; 5) Pacific Consciousness; 6) Professionalism; and, 7) Teamwork. The graduate outcomes serve as the institution's learning outcomes and are being mapped to undergraduate programs.

The primary means for assessing graduate outcomes was course pass rates and grades. Although the curriculum and assignments are aligned to the course pass rates and grades, this sole tool for assessing student learning needs to be expanded to include existing and new rubric measures of key student assignments. Use of rubric data and other means of assessing student learning will enhance the institutions' ability to target areas of need and develop continuous improvement curriculum interventions. In addition to supplementing reliance on pass rates and grades, the university needs to demonstrate student achievement of the seven graduate outcomes across all undergraduate and graduate programs (CFR 1.2).

Integrity and Transparency. The university promotes academic freedom as evidenced by the *Code of Professional Conduct for Academic Staff* and the *Media Relations Policy* that encourages critical comment for academic staff in their respective areas of expertise (CFR 1.3).

The culture for openness was evident in conversations with students and academic staff. At the visit, the USP Students Association members shared that they have a voice and a place as the student representative on university committees such as the University Council and Research Committee. The students also shared that there is an open forum with the vice-chancellor and president once a semester. In addition, academic staff stated they determine the academic content for instruction (CFR 1.3).

USP is owned by 12 countries of which all are represented on the University Council. The university has a strong commitment to diversity of nationality in staff and students. Student enrollment data 2016 show 57.3% of the students are from Fiji, 18.4% are from Solomon Islands, 7.5% from Vanuata, 5.1% from Kiribati, and 4.4% Tonga, with all nations represented in the student body. Staff data also supported diversity in nationality (CFR 1.4).

In 2017, USP established the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and the university's policy is in alignment with WSCUC Equity and Inclusion Policy. The university is committed to providing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning and work environment free from discrimination and sexual harassment which is supported by policies and processes documented throughout the visit (CFR 1.4).

The university established a Disability Resource Centre where students with disabilities seek support, academic assistance, and access to specialized computers. At the visit, students shared their deep appreciation for the Centre facilities and the assistance provided by the Centre manager. It was evident from meeting with the students that the physical Centre and the services provided facilitated their participation in campus life. Students shared that they are successful in their courses because of the support they receive at the Centre. Students are provided with

accommodations such as interpreters, special computers, additional time for exams and

assignments, lecture captioning, and services from the University Buddy System where USP

students provide assistance for notetaking, navigating the campus, and academic-relevant needs.

These types of services are appropriate accommodations for student with disabilities (CFR 1.4).

At USP education is the primary purpose and it has autonomy from external entities. The

governing authority of the university is the University Council comprised of appointed members

from 12 countries as well as representatives from Australia and New Zealand. The Council

while responsive to government regulations, operates autonomously in substantive decision-

making and educational functions. Academic programmes and courses are governed by

academic staff and assured through university committees. For example, the University Senate

is charged with new programme approval and courses prior to be instituted by the Council (CFR

1.5).

There was a strong policy framework at USP as evidenced by a rich policy library

overseen by the policy coordinator. The university has policies, procedures, regulations, and

ordinances that ensure sound business practices in the areas of faculties/colleges, schools and

disciplines, student administrative services, finance, human resources, Centre for Flexible

Learning, information technology, and assurance and compliance (CFR 1.6, 1.7). Easy access

and clarity in policies is necessary for USP due to its complexity of 12 countries and various

regulations. Students and academic and non-academic staff cited various policies throughout the

visit indicating ease of access. In addition, the review team accessed existing policies which

were aligned with WSCUC guidelines. Some of the key policies are: Student Grievance Policy,

Disability Inclusiveness Policy, Credit Points Policy and Ordinance on the Payment of Fees, Residential Charges and Other Debts (CFR 1.6, 1.7).

An example of effective utilization of a policy was in student grievances. Student grievances are addressed through the Student Grievance Policy that provides a process and guiding principles for resolving student grievances as well as an appeal process. Members from the USP Student Association shared that there was a student grievance that went through the process recently and they felt it was an effective and fair process (CFR 1.6). The university also provided documentation to demonstrate implementation of other policies such as academic honesty, transfer credit, and recruitment.

Operational integrity was evidenced in the annual financial report and external financial audits that are conducted twice a year. The institution also has development partners from Australia and New Zealand with a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU). The university requires external audit reports for these MOUs ensuring sound business practices (CFR 1.7).

USP demonstrated honesty and communication throughout the seeking accreditation review process with candor and openness. The university was responsive and provided needed documents in a timely fashion, were truthful in reporting, and showed an eagerness to learn for continuous improvement and institutional effectiveness. In the university's vast documentation with the institutional report and during the visit, it was evident that the institution undertook the seeking accreditation review process seriously at all levels of the university (CFR 1.8).

Based on document review, intensive interviews with USP council, committees, academic and non-academic staff, and students, USP has defined its purposes and established educational objectives aligned with those purposes. The university has a clear mission, vision

and values that lead the strategic plan addressing its distinctive elements as a jointly owned

university of 12 countries and major provider of higher education in the Pacific.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

According to its institutional report, USP offers degree programmes at all three levels

(bachelors, masters, and doctoral) through its three faculties/colleges: Faculty of Arts, Law, and

Education; Faculty of Business and Economics; and Faculty of Science, Technology and

Environment. The university also offers non-degree programmes that carry academic credits

(e.g., certificates and diplomas). All programmes are listed as Levels 7 to 10 in the Fiji

Qualifications Framework, which is aligned to the Australian Qualifications Framework and the

New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

Program Quality. The degree programmes at USP are offered in various modalities,

called flexible modes of study, and include face-to-face, online, blended, and print.

Conversations with academic leaders, the pro vice-chancellor and director of the Centre of

Flexible Learning, and academic staff confirmed the institution's desire to provide comparable

learning across all modes of delivery, which is closely monitored by the Teaching Quality

Committee. Additionally, the use of standardized course outline templates and common

assignments, along with the centralized process of exam moderation and engagement in

assessment tasks, facilitate a consistent student learning experience (CFR 2.1).

At the masters level, USP students have the option of course work only, course work and

supervised research project, or masters by thesis only. At the doctoral level, PhD programmes

follow the British model, thus having no course work. A review of the institutional report, along

with discussions with various academic leaders, indicated that the university needed to develop

core learning outcomes that will apply to the various models of post graduate education with

appropriate levels of rigor at the masters and doctoral level. The lack of post graduate outcomes and their subsequent assessment is an important area of growth for the institution (CFR 2.2b).

According to the institutional report, and verified by conversations with deans, associate deans, and academic staff, the academic staff were actively involved in the development and revision of curricula and the establishment of performance standards. Most notably, USP engaged in the Strategic Total Academic Review (STAR)Project from 2010-2013, which resulted in a comprehensive re-thinking of the USP academic portfolio, including the development of outcomes, mapping, and rubrics. While USP relied heavily on an assessment consultant, its use of a train the trainer model had resulted in significant constituent involvement in the project, although conversations with academic staff involved in the STAR project indicated that momentum had dropped off. In addition to the STAR Project, academic staff were actively involved in curricular development and review through various committees at every level (CFR 2.4). The programme review process involves academic staff from the programme, as well as external reviewers who evaluate the quality of the curriculum.

USP has a rigorous programme development, review, and revision process that includes a large number of quality assurance policies and practices (CFR 2.1).   According to its institutional report, and verified by various academic groups at the visit, any change to curriculum or programmes begins with the discipline or programme and proceeds through several committees and councils before being approved (CFR 2.4). USP employs a 5-year programme review cycle, conducted by a panel of reviewers external to the university (CFR 2.7). The team reviewed three programmes, and had conversations with academic staff who had recently undergone the review process, all of whom indicated that the process is rigorous and helpful. See Standard 4 for more description of programme review.

While the team found that the review and revision of curriculum utilized a rigorous and extensive process, the actual rigor of the degree programmes was not clearly established. The lack of post graduate outcomes prevents the institution from claiming with confidence that students have achieved expected levels of attainment (CFR 2.2b). Additionally, conversations with students at the post graduate level indicated that the rigor could be improved, especially as it relates to support for high-quality research. A review of syllabi indicated significant reliance on quizzes, tests, and labs, with fewer examples of sophisticated or increasingly complex assignments across course levels. While discussions with academic staff indicated the existence of capstones or eportfolios, their utilization for advanced measures of learning were unclear. Additionally, the grading scale which is standardized across all courses, regardless of level, does not align with traditional grading scales found in WSCUC-accredited schools in the United States. Specifically, students at the University of South Pacific can pass a course with 50%, and an exceptional grade (A+) has a range (85-100%) that routinely falls in the B grade range in many US institutions. Conversations with academic staff indicated that the grading scale aligned with New Zealand and Australia; however, the team encourages USP to examine the rigor of its degree programmes, specifically its grading scale and complexity of assignments, to demonstrate a progressively more challenging curriculum and to more clearly align with grading standards at WSCUC-accredited institutions (CFR 2.1).

Student Learning Required for Graduation. Admission and graduation requirements are listed in the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programme Requirements and Admission Regulations, published annually. Requirements appear clear, although the institution acknowledges challenges associated with admissions when governed by 12 different countries (CFR 2.2).

According to the institutional report, expectations for student learning are communicated in various ways, including the Learning, Teaching, and Student Services website and, most notably, in the standardized course outline template (CFR 2.3). The institution has seven graduate outcomes at the undergraduate level (communication, creativity, critical thinking and quantitative reasoning, ethics, pacific consciousness, professionalism, teamwork). These outcomes are mapped to the WSCUC Core Competencies and are also mapped to programme level and course level outcomes. According to its institutional report, "the university does not use the terminology of 'general education' but employs an approach to general education which integrates the outcomes of general education into courses in each level of a programme" (CFR 2.2a). Additionally, in 2011, the university introduced four mandatory generic courses which provide students with a foundation for development of some of the general education competencies identified in graduate outcomes, namely, information literacy, academic writing, ethics and Pacific consciousness. A review of the materials indicated that these courses have core assignments associated with the aforementioned outcomes, each of which is graded with a rubric. What was less clear was whether the rubric data is aggregated across students to determine whether outcomes are being achieved at the institutional level (CFR 2.3).

At the post graduate level, USP acknowledges that it has work to be done in the area of student learning outcomes (CFR 2.3). In point of fact, the institution has not yet developed formalized post graduate outcomes but conversations with associate deans, graduate-level academic staff, and the Director of Research confirmed plans are in place to develop these outcomes, with varying levels of rigor at the masters and doctoral levels (CFR 2.2b). In its report, USP emphasized the scholarly and research-focused skills associated with post-graduate work, and it identified that it emphasizes five transferable skills (research and scholarly thinking,

information literacy, personal and intellectual autonomy, ethical, social, and professional understanding, and communication) which build on the graduate outcomes from the undergraduate programmes. However, these were not formalized learning outcomes at the time of the visit.

Assessing Student Learning and Achievement. A review of materials provided by the institution, as well as conversations with multiple constituents, indicated that USP had invested significant time and energy into developing, mapping and aligning teaching activities and assessments to course outcomes, program outcomes, and graduate outcomes, but was still in the early developmental phases of collecting and assessing student learning data. As it pertains to the assessment of graduate outcomes, recently (2017), the institution had adopted tri-level rubrics (benchmark, milestone, capstone) for each of the seven outcomes (CFR 2.3). Conversations with many different groups indicated that while outcomes existed and were aligned to these graduate outcomes, the assessment practices were still in the early developmental stages, and it was unclear to the team how these rubrics were utilized in the context of assessment. Indeed, the rubrics seemed to be a curriculum mapping tool instead of an assessment tool (CFR 2.4). The university did consider multiple forms of evidence for assessing student achievement, utilizing indirect measures by examining survey data and employer feedback, but according to USP's institutional report, and verified through various conversations, the primary source of direct evidence it used to evaluate achievement of outcomes was student pass rates or grades in a course. Academic staff were very diligent in analyzing pass rates at the course level and discussing findings in end of the semester assessment meetings. When discussing assessment practices with various staff groups, many referenced the substantial alignment of teaching activities to course and programme outcomes as evidence that assessment was taking place and

students were learning. In essence, the philosophy that "alignment equals assessment" seemed to be prevalent. Additionally, the institution acknowledged that it did not yet have mechanisms for collecting assessment data at the programme and institutional levels to determine achievement of the seven graduate outcomes, which makes judgments about graduate achievement levels incomplete (CFR 1.2, 2.6).

At the time of the visit, the university had relied heavily on an assessment consultant who had helped them make significant progress but who acknowledged that more work needed to be done. The institution was going to utilize the newly-designed curriculum and development plan in each faculty to take assessment to the next level, including the use of other sources of student evidence, better fit-for-purpose assessments, systematic assessment processes, and attempting to create a culture of inquiry around the teaching, learning, and assessment practices of academic staff. To accomplish these objectives, it was noted that academic staff need significantly more training and support than can be accomplished with assessment expert. Devoting more resources to equip academic staff development in teaching, learning, and assessment would be a worthwhile investment (CFR 2.4, 3.3). In summary, while USP has begun to implement assessment practices at the university, it requires significant, continued improvement.

Faculty (Academic Staff) Qualifications and Support. Academic staff are hired to teach in academic programmes and are expected to have a Postgraduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching (CFR 2.1, 2.8, 2.9). Faculty are also expected to have a qualification higher than the degree they teach. Additionally, a doctoral qualification in the relevant discipline is a requirement for academic appointment for Assistant Lecturer levels and above, as well as for supervision of doctoral research. Discussions with the deans indicated that some programmes have challenges finding high-quality faculty, which can put a burden on those who carry the load

in the department. The challenge of filling positions was also noted by heads of school and faculty. USP also employs part-time and temporary academic staff for semester-long contracts (CFR 2.1, 3.1).

According to its institutional report, USP had clear expectations for research, scholarship, and creative activity (CFR 2.8). According to the deputy vice-chancellor of research, innovation, and international, full-time academic staff were assigned to one of four different workload allocations for teaching, scholarship, and service, thus enabling academic staff who were "research active" more time and resources to produce research; however, all staff were expected to perform well in teaching and research. In order to promote high-quality teaching and research, academic staff are evaluated and measured under the Quality of Teaching (QoT) Policy and the Quality of Research (QoR) Policy, both of which have criteria that must be met in an annual performance review in order to advance. The linkages between teaching, scholarship, and service are clear; however, the linkage to assessment and student learning is less clear (CFR 2.9), as the institution is still in the formative stages in producing a robust assessment strategy. See Standard 3 for a more detailed discussion of faculty evaluation.

Academic staff seem to be supported for high caliber research and teaching through various means. The university has a Staff Development Committee that can allocate funds to academic staff for travel and research, and each of the faculties have professional development funds. Additionally, funds are provided to faculties based on the rigor of publication produced by its staff, as well as the number of students supervised for masters and doctoral theses. In each faculty, there is a committee in place to disseminate research funds to staff and students. There are also research prizes for five types of research, including one for student research, as well as prizes for excellence in teaching and excellence in student learning support. Academic staff can

also be awarded a sabbatical to pursue research. According to its institutional report, the teaching excellence awards not only recognize the value of teaching, but also that research and creative activity leads to innovations in pedagogy and assessment (CFR 2.8).

Other forms of staff support, such as traditional staff development workshops and new staff induction (aka, new faculty orientation) were less developed. The institution has a Learning, Teaching, and Student Services (LTSS) website that has some resources, but needs to be improved, especially to resource regional and online staff. Conversations with faculty and the assessment consultant verify the need for more and better staff resourcing and training. According to deputy vice-chancellor of learning, teaching, and student services, the new strategic plan will allocate more resources and a more centralized approach to staff development, possibly through the pro vice-chancellor and director of the Centre Flexible Learning's office (CFR 2.8, 3.3).

Student Services and Support. Based on conversations with students and staff, it was apparent that the institution was committed to supporting students and facilitating their success. The institution tracks student progress through four educational performance indicators (course completion/pass rates; retention rates; qualification completion rates; and progression from undergraduate to post graduate study) which they benchmark against some New Zealand universities. As part of its self-study, USP discovered that pass rates varied by full-time vs part-time status, with part-time students having lower pass rates. As a result, USP invested in Your-Tutor (now Studiosity), an online tutorial for part-time students to supplement other services that were offered and accessible to full-time students. Notably missing from the systematic tracking is any consistent measure of performance on the seven graduate outcomes, a challenge listed in the section above.

At the time of the visit, an ongoing initiative of the university was the first year student experience. Each faculty/college provides a First Year Experience (FYE) coordinator, and there is a FYE coordinator within Campus Life. The coordinator within Campus Life manages a buddy programme, which pairs a first-year student with a more senior student to help with acclimation. FYE coordinators in the faculties work with course coordinators to assist and orient first-year students with a particular emphasis on at-risk students. New students also experience orientation week, which is designed to inform students about the services available to them; an online orientation is also available for students who cannot attend orientation in person, which can be accessed after the first week. Students at regional campuses are supported through the Success@USP programme, which provides information to facilitate student success academically. However, a fairly common finding by the team was that regional campus support was not to the same level as the support provided on the main campus (CFR 2.12).

USP also has support services in place for students with disabilities and at-risk students. At-risk students are identified by student administrative services who informs the appropriate FYE coordinator and Student Learning Specialist (SLSS) within a faculty/college. Conversations with the SLSS illuminated a number of effective programs to facilitate student success. According to the SLSS, students who engaged their various services often experienced higher pass rates. In conversations with FYE coordinators and SLSS, several challenges were identified. Services offered by specialists were unevenly endorsed or supported by course coordinators and higher levels of administration. When course coordinators incentivized participation in support activities, participation (and success) increased dramatically. Additionally, the SLSS noted they were often perceived as a place for remediation rather than a program that facilitated success for all types of students. A change in perspective could increase

participation (and ultimately success) rates of students. A final challenge to be addressed was the lack of services offered to online students and students at the 6 regional campuses where a SLSS did not exist (CFR 2.12).

In terms of students with disabilities, the Disabilities Resource Centre, guided by the Disability Inclusiveness Policy, works to create an inclusive, barrier-free learning environment. Conversation with students who utilize the resources of the Centre were very positive in terms of the services and support provided. The provision of scholarships for students with disabilities to study at the main campus is an excellent resource worth commending (CFR 2.13).

According to the institutional report, all students benefit from academic advising at the beginning of every semester (CFR 2.12). Advising is carried out in face-to-face and online formats. To ensure accuracy in information, the university has adopted the Academic Advice Framework, which identifies which staff can give advice and make decisions related to specific academic activities. Transfer students are assisted through the Credit Transfer Regulations which detail ways in which prior student learning can be given credit, as well as receiving credit from other institutions. USP limits transfer credit to not more than 50% of the courses in the student's new programme (CFR 2.14).

As it pertains to co-curricular programming and support (CFR 2.11), USP's model is to incorporate non-academic initiatives within the various faculties/colleges, often related to discipline-specific student associations. Campus Life oversees the function of several centers and promotes activities for students, each of which is evaluated by survey so that improvements can be made. This includes the first-year buddy program, which is evaluated at two points in time. Unfortunately, many of the activities offered through Campus Life do not extend to regional campuses or online students, a challenge that should be addressed (CFR 2.11).

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structure to Ensure Sustainability

Faculty and Staff. The institution has a mature, progressive academic staff (faculty) structure based on tenure and quality of teaching and research. Terminal degrees are required for advancement past the rank of Senior Lecturer. In addition to their teaching and research responsibilities academic staff are expected to contribute to the academic community appropriately through curriculum development and serving on a wide variety of university committees including strategic planning and marketing. A review of faculty rank data by program reflects sufficient terminally degreed and full-time faculty for each degree type and program (CFR 3.1).

The university utilizes an Internal Funding Model (IFM) to determine the needed staffing levels of academic and non-academic staff needed to support students in all programs and budgets to provide adequate financial resources aligned with enrollment across the faculties/colleges (CFR 3.3). The numerous physical locations occupied by the university is also considered by the IFM to ensure appropriate coverage by geographical location. The IFM is used to measure program viability by degree as part of the program review process (CFR 2.7). In addition, the IFM is used to determine professional development funding for each faculty (college). These resources are then allocated by a dean's committee within the colleges. The team reviewed the professional development policies for academic and non-academic personnel and found them to be clear and appropriate (CFR 3.3).

The university has detailed and specific hiring and recruitment plans that are appropriate for the character and mission of the institution. A detailed orientation program is utilized to orient new hires not only to the institution, but also the diverse cultural environment the

institution operates in. A formal program of training and mentorship is provided to new

academic staff, although the training needs to be more fully developed. Both academic staff and

non-academic and staff are formally evaluated at least annually in accordance with detailed

policies for their employment type. These performance evaluations could result in promotion,

change of responsibilities, or termination based on the outcome of job duties. Academic staff are

evaluated according to their rank and assigned teaching, research, and administrative

responsibilities. They are also evaluated based on their participation in assessment, student

learning outcomes, student reviews, peer evaluation, and professional development activities.

An online evaluation system is used called iPerform to facilitate the evaluation of academic staff

portfolios and data collection and analysis across the university (CFR 3.2).

The challenge of hiring and retaining quality leaders and staff was cited by the vice-

chancellor and president as one of the most pressing challenges of the institution. Currently a

number of key leadership positions are vacant (including a permanent human resources (HR)

director) which has limited the ability of the institution to advance its strategic priorities.

Specifically, the institution has had difficulty attracting specific skill sets and academic

qualifications to work at the regional campuses. The vice-chancellor and president is keenly

aware of the effect this present situation is having on the institution and is seeking additional

flexibility in hiring policies and practice from the Council to assist in filling critical positions

(CFR 3.1).

The institution should prioritize hiring to fill key vacancies. As discussed in Standard 2,

additional academic staff professional development is needed in the assessment of student

learning and utilization of assessment data to improve teaching (CFR 3.1, 3.3).

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources. The team reviewed the fiscal years 2014-2016 financial statements audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) which reflect a surplus in each fiscal year. The institution receives a significant portion of its annual revenues from the governments in the twelve countries in which they operate as well as from other development partners such as Australia and New Zealand. These governments commit to funding levels in three-year cycles which provides sustainability in the institution's revenue stream. During the 50-year history of the university, no government defaulted on commitment for funding (CFR 3.4). The university does not derive a significant source of revenue from non-education activities. The institution engages in short and long-term budgeting based on enrollment management projections. The 2017 annual plan framework and process was reviewed which places a priority on alignment with the strategic plan and educational purposes for the annual budgeting process (CFR 3.4). Multi-year plans exist for capital expenditures, information technology infrastructure upgrades, and facilities deferred maintenance.

The most significant challenge to the institution in the area of information and technology resources is the availability of reliable and affordable high-speed internet access (connectivity) at all physical locations. Historically, satellite technology has been the primary connection for the campuses including the many remote regional campuses spread over 33 million square miles in the region. The university has a comprehensive plan for moving away from satellite technology given its inherent limitations and cost and is actively working with the developers of existing and new fiber-optic cables to take advantage of improved speed and capacity as available. Within the next two years, all islands with a university presence will have underwater fiber-optic connectivity to the internet (CFR 3.4). According to the USP Computer Strategy document, all desktop computers are on a 5-year replacement cycle and 90% of IT equipment is maintained

within its warranty period. Wifi is available to students in most academic and living areas which has caused additional pressure on bandwidth as the number of personal communication devices has increased (CFR 3.5).

As a result of the current limitation on connectivity, the university has imposed a temporary block on student and staff access to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter from 9am – 4pm daily to improve access for academic use. The director of IT services stated that this measure should be lifted in approximately two years with further upgrades to their systems. Students and staff expressed frustration in the impact the restrictions have placed on the use of social media for academic research and departmental use to communicate with stakeholders. The ban also reduces access to critical information such as cyclone warnings. The institution should work to make needed system improvements so the ban can be lifted as soon as possible and in the interim, IT services should approve legitimate requests for access for university departmental and research purposes (CFR 3.5).

The institution is also challenged in maintaining a large number of physical regional campuses to meet its diverse geographic mandate. Many of these campuses experience harsh weather at times, as the team did in our visit to the main campus during a tropical cyclone. However, the physical facilities are conducive to the educational mission of the instruction and provide for an adequate learning environment. The team observed modern lecture halls with smart teaching technology and modern science labs. In some cases, capital improvements have been funded directly by development partners such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and China for constructing and upgrading facilities or bilateral agreements with member governments (CFR 3.5). The challenge going forward will be to continue to provide adequate physical campus

improvements and deferred maintenance while increasing the investment in IT resources to support expanded online educational offerings (CFR 3.4).

Students and academic staff have access to extensive online educational resources through a comprehensive offering of ebooks and 56 online databases such as JSTOR, EBSCOHost, and LexisNexus. As expected, the physical collection is limited and is reducing consistent with the overall trends in library offerings (CFR 3.5). During our visit to the main campus, the team observed a crowded library with few open study spaces available and a que for use of the computers in the library lobby. We also observed approximately six other computer labs at full capacity. Further, many students were seen sitting on the floors in hallways and on the ground outside buildings using laptops and other electronic devices. It is unclear if the lack of available study and computer use space was a function of the very rainy weather on the day of the team visit, though the university should carefully monitor campus capacity for adequate and appropriate computer use and academic study spaces (CFR 3.5). However, the lack of available study and computer use space was a chronic issue at the regional campuses (CFR 3.5). The team observed outdated physical research publications in the library such as a set of Encyclopedia Britannica from 2002. These out-of-date physical resources can be culled from the collection over time to encourage use of more current resources available electronically and to make way for increased study, collaboration, computer-use spaces (CFR 3.5).

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making. The institutional report and extensive artifacts paint a comprehensive picture of an institution that was honest about its strengths and challenges and how they are meeting those challenges. Further, the vice-chancellor and president (CEO) was candid during the team's discussion with him about challenges and actions being taken to address them. The team met with leaders of the institution

from university council members to students who all were engaging and honest about the institution. The university's extensive policy framework places a strong emphasis on compliance at all levels. Nothing came to our attention to indicate a lack of integrity, appropriate responsibility, or accountability by any level or by any individual at the institution (CFR 3.6).

The team reviewed the organizational structures of the institution and noted that clear reporting structures exist that facilitate decision-making processes. This was verified through our meetings with campus leadership during our visit. We observed examples of top down and bottom up communication as well as cross-campus functional working groups. These structures appear appropriate for the size and complexity of the institution and have facilitated examination and improvement of institutional capacity and educational effectiveness (CFR 3.7).

As part of the team's visit, we met with the vice-chancellor and president, and executive director of finance (CFO). The vice-chancellor and president has been associated with the institution for forty years and in his current role for the last ten. The CFO has been at the institution for the last ten years and in his role for the last four years (CFR 3.8). The board is currently comprised of approximately 35 members representing the member countries, development partners, academic and non-academic staff, students, and members with useful knowledge or experience such as accounting or law. During our visit, we were able to meet with approximately 1/3 of the board members who were engaged in their knowledge of the institution at an appropriate level of detail and optimistic about the mission and future of the university. The board exercises appropriate oversight of legal and financial matters, approves the annual budget and strategic plan, and evaluates the vice-chancellor and president based on achievement of the strategic plan and other factors (CFR 3.9).

As part of their regular job responsibilities, academic staff are expected to provide service to the university including serving on committees and participating in curriculum development and assessment. Our meetings with academic leadership, academic staff, and the assessment consultant, as well as a review of policy documents, shows that academic staff are responsible for the curriculum and the development of learning outcomes and the assessment of student learning (CFR 3.10).

Standard 4. Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes. The institution has a demonstrable commitment to excellence and quality assurance with appropriate policies to guide the university. This is evident from the existence of a University Quality Policy that is aligned with the Strategic Plan (CFR 4.1). Progress on the quality assurance outcomes stipulated in the University Quality Policy, implementation, and evaluation is monitored using the University's Strategic Plan Online Monitoring System (CFR 4.6). As of March 2018, the university has achieved 81% of its strategic planning targets, which compares well with the benchmark performance (University of Sydney) of 70% overall achievement for the full duration of the strategic plan (CFR 4.3). The establishment of a Planning and Quality Assurance Framework has further strengthened the university's quality assurance processes in place to collect, analyze, and interpret data, track results, and assess effectiveness.

The Planning and Quality Office (PQO) is responsible for coordinating the design, implementation, and continuous improvement of all the university's processes and activities that ensure a quality teaching and learning environment. A central tenant of the PQO is the quality assurance staff, consisting of the senior quality assurance coordinator and two quality assurance

officers. On-site interviews with associate deans and academic staff validated that the quality

assurance staff are instrumental partners that provide decision support in many areas such as

assessment, program review, benchmarking, and accreditation (CFR 4.2, 4.3, 4.5).

The senior data analyst in the PQO manages the Dashboard & Business Intelligence

System (DIBS) which provides data on enrollments and student success indicators, all

disaggregated by relevant student characteristics (CFR 4.2). The senior data analyst consults with

academic and non-academic units across the institution to incorporate DIBS data in their

planning and decision-making processes (CFR 4.6). On-site interviews confirmed that the PQO

collaborates closely with student administrative services and ensures university-wide consistency

in reporting of data (CFR 4.1).

The university has moved to a new operational model that devolves institutional research

to the Faculties and Sections. A data steward employed at each faculty and section works closely

with the senior data analyst to develop unit performance plans. On-site interviews with academic

staff confirmed that this new 'division of labor' approach is yielding higher efficiency and

empowering information-users to be more data-driven. However, executive-level coordination of

institutional research is still lacking. Filling the vacant position of the vice president (Planning,

Quality & Digital Services) that oversees the PQO is critical to fostering a greater culture of

inquiry across the university. The senior data analyst is actively planning towards emerging

concepts in institutional research such as analytics and data visualization (CFR 4.7). Effective

senior-level support will be necessary in order for these new data support approaches and

methods to materialize.

Based on interviews with faculty and staff at all USP campuses, it is suffice to say that

institutional research practices at the regional campuses are less developed than at the Laucala

campus. It is recommended that more resources and training are provided to regional campuses to strengthen institutional research practices and use data to effectively make improvements. The Solomon Islands, in particular, with the development of the new campus is likely to see a strong enrollment growth, because fewer students will need to travel to Fiji. Anticipating and responding to this changing higher education landscape, with attention to professional development in areas of planning and decision-making, will be an important area for institutional research going forward.

Institutional Learning and Improvement. Data to inform institutional learning and improvement are collected from multiple sources. Data based on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the university's teaching, learning and support are collected through the Total Experience Survey, Student Evaluation of Courses Survey, and Graduate Destination Survey (CFR 4.3, 4.4). The Student Grievances policy provides a formal mechanism for reviewing and resolving grievances about matters or issues relating to student experiences at the university. The institutional report provided evidence of the tracking and monitoring of student grievances (CFR 1.6). The Programme Advisory Committee also provides opportunities for students, staff, and industry to discuss issues regarding the overall nature of disciplines and programmes, to ensure that their scope and content will meet the needs of the regional countries, in particular employers, industry and the profession (CFR 4.5, 4.7).

The process for coordinating academic programme review resides with the senior quality assurance coordinator under the guidance of the deputy vice-chancellor for learning, teaching and student services. The university's programme review encompasses a faculty-driven process for continuously assessing and enhancing the quality of programs (CFR 4.3). The evaluation is conducted through a combination of self-evaluation, followed by external peer-evaluation. It is a

comprehensive analysis of program quality, analyzing a wide variety of data about the program. Data on enrollments, student success, finance, and human resources are reported and analyzed in the program review. On-site interviews with academic staff in politics, sociology, and biology demonstrated that the results of the programme reviews are being used to inform follow-up planning and budgeting processes at various levels in the institution—programs, faculties, university—and incorporated into the institution's overall quality assurance system (CFR 4.5, 4.6). The university's program review occurs on a regular cycle of five years: each program/degree is reviewed every five years (CFR 4.4).

SECTION III. PREPARATION FOR ACCREDITATION UNDER THE 2013 HANDBOOK OF ACCREDITATION

Under the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation, USP will need to focus its attention on areas of degree programs (meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees), educational quality (core competencies and standards of performance at graduation) and sustainability (preparing for the changing higher educational environment) as it prepares for reaffirmation following the granting of Initial Accreditation.

Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees. USP has articulated graduate attributes and expected student learning outcomes at the institutional, program and course levels. In preparation for its reaffirmation, USP will need to continue to demonstrate that the meaning of USP degree is the unique set of competencies at the expected level of performance by USP students upon graduation. The quality of USP degrees should be visible in the alignment of the outcomes at different levels. USP will need to demonstrate that its internal and external regulatory mechanisms are working and being monitored, such as the regular

reporting to the Teaching Quality Committee and the implementation of a systemic schedule of monitoring and compliance.

Educational Quality: Core Competencies and Standards of Performance at Graduation. The alignment of graduate outcomes and program graduate outcomes, along with the course learning activities and assessment, will need to be reviewed and strengthened given the passage of time and changes in rubrics. The curriculum mapping for the postgraduate programs will need to be completed, reviewed and strengthen, as necessary. Implementation of the Curriculum Review and Development Plan should be completed and reviewed.

Sustainability: Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment. USP leadership in the Pacific region in the use of teaching and learning technologies and its IT infrastructure will need to keep pace with the impact of technology and digital technologies on higher education. It will need to develop a systemic proactive plan for both staff and student to efficiently maximize enhancements in higher education.

SECTION IV. INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

While complete, USP's Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI) lacks substance and relies heavily on uniform language. While it is understandable that the process of review and revision would be consistent across programmes; the use of standardized language related to evidence collected and assessed raises concern, especially in light of the team's findings that assessment practices are still in early stages. As such, the lack of specificity confirms the under-developed assessment process. Review of the materials provided related to assessment confirm that program-level and institutional-level assessment is rudimentary, relying heavily on course grades, completion rates, and other indirect measures of success. The lack of

programme-specific assessments as evidence of student program learning outcome (PLO) achievement is an area needing improvement. Additionally, the inability of the university to identify achievement of the seven graduate outcomes across the university is an area to be addressed. While USP has well-defined mapping and review processes, it lacks sophistication in the collection and assessment of student evidence that is directly related to PLOs and graduate outcomes. This is illustrated in the PLO IEEI.

SECTION V. FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations

The team commends the University of the South Pacific for:

1. The university's mission that contributes to the public good through a vision of achieving excellence and innovation for sustainable development of the Pacific Island countries.
2. Strategic planning processes that are comprehensive, inclusive of key stakeholders and forward-looking. USP achieved 80% of the current 2013-2018 strategic plan's objectives and all objectives are tied to budget allocations; results have been reported on an annual basis. A new strategic plan will be initiated by the University Council in 2019.
3. The university's and member countries' keen awareness of their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change that have resulted in academic programs and research activities in climate change and sustainable development. USP has taken a leadership role in the dissemination of knowledge and expertise in these areas within the Pacific region and internationally.
4. The institution's sustainable financial position with reliable diversified revenue sources and alignment of financial planning and the strategic plan.

5. USP's commitment to continuous quality improvement with regard to curricular development. The university has numerous quality assurance processes to verify that curricula are designed, reviewed, and revised with high levels of faculty engagement and oversight. USP's programme review process provides an effective mechanism for curricular improvement.

6. The university's commitment to the use of standardized course outline templates and common assignments, along with the centralized process of exam moderation and engagement in assessment tasks, aimed toward a consistent student learning experience.

7. Establishing the Planning and Quality Office, which exemplifies an organizational commitment to quality assurance, and formalizing planning processes across constituencies, resulting in documents such as the Planning and Quality Assurance Framework and University Quality Policy.

8. Providing support, accommodations, and a strong community through the Disability Resource Centre and continuing to expand accessibility for students with disabilities throughout the region.

Recommendations

The team recommends:

1. A focus on reducing vacancies in key leadership and academic and non-academic staff positions to facilitate progress on the institution's strategic objectives and using increased flexibility in hiring practices (CFR 3.1, 3.8).

2. A continued commitment to and an appropriate investment in improving information technology resources and connectivity to meet the needs of current students and facilitate the planned expansion of distance education delivery (CFR 3.5).

3. While USP has begun to implement assessment practices, the university, inclusive of the main and all regional campuses, needs to significantly and continually improve the assessment of student learning outcomes, as well as use more direct sources of evidence for assessing student achievement of both undergraduate program learning outcomes and post-graduate outcomes. USP should supplement its reliance on pass rates and grades with the results of the assessment of student learning outcomes. The university should demonstrate student achievement of the seven graduate outcomes across all undergraduate programs (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 1.2).

4. USP's programs should reflect appropriate rigor in its degree programs exemplified, for example, in the grading scale and complexity of assignments demonstrating a progressively more challenging curriculum (CFR 2.1).

5. That the university further develop institutional research throughout the regional campuses that includes use of disaggregated data, standards of performance, and internal and external benchmark comparisons (CFR 4.2).

6. That distance education courses include faculty-initiated regular and substantive interaction with students synchronously or asynchronously via internet, one-way or two-way transmissions or audio conferencing. USP needs to differentiate students admitted to a distance education program or to a face-to-face program to ensure comparability of programs in metrics of student success such as student learning outcomes, retention, graduation rate, and student satisfaction (CFR 2.5).

7. That the institution expand its development and training of academic staff, specifically in the areas of effective pedagogy, best practices in assessment, and use of data in planning and decision-making (CFR 3.3).

APPENDICES

Credit Hour and Program Length Review Checklist

Marketing and Recruitment Review

Student Complaints Review

Transfer Credit Review

Off-Campus Locations Review

Distance Education Review

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE FORMS

OVERVIEW
There are four forms that WSCUC uses to address institutional compliance with some of the federal regulations affecting institutions and accrediting agencies:

1 – Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form
2 – Marketing and Recruitment Review Form
3 – Student Complaints Form
4 – Transfer Credit Policy Form

During the Accreditation Visit, teams complete these four forms and add them as an appendix to the Team Report. Teams are not required to include a narrative about any of the matters in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings, Commendations, and Recommendations section of the team report.

1 - CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM
Under federal regulations, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's credit hour policy and processes as well as the lengths of its programs.

Credit Hour - §602.24(f)
The accrediting agency, as part of its review of an institution for renewal of accreditation, must conduct an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of the institution's assignment of credit hours.

(1) The accrediting agency meets this requirement if-
    (i) It reviews the institution's-
        (A) Policies and procedures for determining the credit hours, as defined in 34 CFR 600.2, that the institution awards for courses and programs; and
        (B) The application of the institution's policies and procedures to its programs and coursework; and
    (ii) Makes a reasonable determination of whether the institution's assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education.

(2) In reviewing and evaluating an institution's policies and procedures for determining credit hour assignments, an accrediting agency may use sampling or other methods in the evaluation.

Credit hour is defined by the Department of Education as follows:
A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than—

(1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or

(2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Credit Hour Policy.

Program Length - §602.16(a)(1)(viii)
Program length may be seen as one of several measures of quality and as a proxy measure for scope of the objectives of degrees or credentials offered. Traditionally offered degree programs are generally approximately 120 semester credit hours for a bachelor's degree, and 30 semester credit hours for a master's degree; there is greater variation at the doctoral level depending on the type of program. For programs offered in non-traditional formats, for which program length is not a relevant and/or reliable quality measure, reviewers should ensure that available information clearly defines desired program outcomes and graduation requirements, that institutions are ensuring that program outcomes are achieved, and that there is a reasonable correlation between the scope of these outcomes and requirements and those typically found in traditionally offered degrees or programs tied to program length.

CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? X YES ❏ NO
	Where is the policy located? https://policylib.usp.ac.fj/form.readdoc.php?id=666
	Comments: The Credit Points System at USP is based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and a comparison of USP credit points to the US credit hours, shows that two credit points are equivalent to one credit hour (CFR 1.6.6).
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? x YES ❏ NO
	Does the institution adhere to this procedure? x YES ❏ NO
	Comments:
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? YES X NO
	Comments: courses are published in the Handbook and Calendar (https://www.usp.ac.fj/fileadmin/scripts/HandbookAndCalendar/HandbookAndCalendar_2018/index.html) but actual meeting times are published in the course shell in moodle. The University manages the scheduling of classes as the term approaches and tries to avoid conflicts but recorded lectures can be used if a student has a conflict.
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses *Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.*	How many syllabi were reviewed? 14
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Online
	What degree level(s)? undergraduate, masters, doctoral
	What discipline(s)? all 3 Faculties
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? x YES ❏ NO
	Comments:
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated) *Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.*	How many syllabi were reviewed? 3
	What kinds of courses? Theses, lab, print
	What degree level(s)? masters, doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Engineering, psychology, earth science
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? x YES ❏ NO
	Comments:
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? 4
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? Bachelor, masters, PhD
	What degree level(s)? undergraduate, masters, doctoral
	What discipline(s)? all 3 Faculties
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? x YES ❏ NO
	Comments: some masters and all doctoral programs follow the British model and do not include course work. Length of program will vary based on research project and student initiative

Review Completed By: Stephanie Juillerat, Ph.D.
Date: April 12, 2018

MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: The institution does not currently accept US Federal Title IV funds. While not applicable to the majority of the University's efforts, the Institution does comply with this requirement as it applies to Title IV eligible US students.
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: The schedule of tuition and fees was reviewed on pages 41 – 51 in the 2017 Prospectus document which is available in print on campuses and on the website.
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: The Institution has many internship and pipeline programs for students with local employers and governments.

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Aaron Christopher
Date: 04/12/2018

STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? ■ YES ❑ NO
	If so, Is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Where? Listed in the university's official policies and procedures manual, and on the university's website: https://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=19199
	Comments: The University Senate approved the Student Grievance Policy & Procedures, administered by the Office of the DVC LTSS. Any student grievance about decisions, facilities and so on, is made in accordance with this Policy. A student grievance email address student_grievance@usp.ac.fj is available to students, and is managed by the Office of DVC LTSS.
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? ■ YES ❑ NO If so, please describe briefly: The Student Grievances Procedures provides the formal mechanism for resolving grievances about matters or issues relating to student experiences at the University. These Procedures apply to all students of the University, and cover all grievances that may be reported under the Student Grievance Policy.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? ■ YES ❑ NO
	Comments: Evidence in the institutional report, and on-site interviews with staff and students, confirmed that there is an adequate procedure for addressing student complaints.
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? ■ YES ❑ NO If so, where? Student grievances are maintained by the DVC LTSS, and include data collected on student grievances submitted at Faculties and Centres, student support sections including Campus Life and regional campuses.
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? ■ YES ❑ NO If so, please describe briefly: The DVC LTSS analyzes data relating to grievances on an annual basis to identify trends. The DVC LTSS provides an annual report along with recommendations on student grievances to the Senate via the VC & P and include quantitative and qualitative data.
	Comments: The Institutional Report provided evidence of the tracking and monitoring of student grievances (Item CFR 1.6.2). For example, There were a total of 299 grievances that were raised with DVC LTSS which involved academic and administrative decisions. However, the majority i.e. 195 or 65.2% of grievances were to do with Repeating a Course above the permissible number of times as outlined in Regulation 6.3: Students Who Fail a Course.

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)
See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: John Stanley (SAV1 Team Member)
Date: April 11, 2018

TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? ■ YES ❐ NO
	Is the policy publically available? ■ YES ❐ NO If so, where? USP Handbook and Calendar, and the university's website: https://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=crosscredits
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? ■ YES ❐ NO
	Comments: The university has a well-established policy and procedure for reviewing and approving transfer credits. On-site interviews with the Manager of Student Administration Services (Litia Konusi) and Enrolment Manager (Totivi Bokini-Ratu) provided assurances that the review of transfer credit requests are handled in a timely manner by the university. The university maintains its own transfer credit equivalency database. One staff member is now dedicated to managing the transfer credit process, including supervising exceptions and precedents. This has reduced the number of student complaints, which was already reportedly low.

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

   (1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and

   (2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: John Stanley (SAV1 Team Member)
Date: April 11, 2018

OFF-CAMPUS LOCATIONS REVIEW-TEAM REPORT APPENDIX

Institution: University of South Pacific
Type of Visit: SAV1
Name of reviewer/s:
Date/s of review:

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all visits in which off-campus sites were reviewed[1]. One form should be used for each site visited. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this matter in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

1. Site Name and Address

    The University of the South Pacific
    Emalus Campus
    Port Vila, Vanuatu

2. Background Information (number of programs offered at this site; degree levels; FTE of faculty and enrollment; brief history at this site; designation as a branch campus standalone location, or satellite location by WSCUC)

    Vanuatu, previously known as the New Hebrides, was a founding member of the University of the South Pacific. In March 1980 the University established a Centre in Port Vila with Dr. Howard Van Trease as foundation Director. The Centre was initially located within the Ministry of Social Affairs, Lolam House, Port Vila. Later, with the approval of the Vanuatu Government, the Centre moved to Independence Park to what had been the British Education Office during the period of Condominium. The main function of the Centre, initially, was to support the USP distance education program.

    With a total of only eight Ni-Vanuatu university graduates at independence in 1980, Vanuatu was in need of trained personnel. The USP Centre provided a second chance opportunity for many former high school graduates to complete tertiary studies in-country. A significant number of current senior Ni-Vanuatu public servants, teachers and private sector employees commenced tertiary students at the Centre. By 2011, 43 years after the establishment of USP, an estimated 741 Ni-Vanuatu had completed bachelor degrees at USP. This includes those who have completed law programs at Emalus Campus.

    In 1983, the University established the Pacific Languages Unit, located within the USP Centre, headed by Professor Terry Crowley. This was followed in 1985 by the Pacific Law Unit headed by Professor Don Paterson. In 1989, the Centre moved into new facilities at Emalus – then known as the USP Vanuatu Complex. Initial funding for infrastructure was provided by the New Zealand Government.

    In 1994, the University Council's decision to establish the School of Law in Vanuatu brought further expansion of facilities (financed by a loan from the PRC) and re-designation of the complex as the USP Emalus Campus. The presence of the USP School of Law in Vanuatu not only enabled Ni-Vanuatu to undertake legal studies without leaving home but attracted students from other USP member countries to Emalus—an enriching experience for both Ni-Vanuatu and regional students.

    USP continues to develop new ways to expand and support DFL beyond the Emalus Campus in Port Vila. Study centres in the islands have been developed following agreements between USP and provincial authorities in regard to accommodation and running costs. The first centre was established in 1981 in

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[1] See Protocol for Review of Off-Campus Sites to determine whether and how many sites will be visited.

5/1/14

Luganville, Santo to serve Sanma Province. In 1997, a centre was opened at Isangel on Tanna to serve Tafea Province, and in 2004 a centre was established at Saratamata on Ambae to serve Penama Province. The Saratamata centre no longer operates. Expansion to Malampa occurred in 2012 with a center at Norsup. A proposal exists for a centre for Torba province as resources become available. Arrangements have also been made with a number of high schools across Vanuatu to enroll their students in USP Preliminary and Foundation courses. These are assessed by University staff and credited in the normal way towards USP awards.

In addition to the annual financial grant, the Government of Vanuatu (GoV) has funded the construction of facilities by way of bilateral arrangements with government's development partners. In 1996, the Australian Government provided a grant to build new facilities for the centre at Luganville, including classrooms, computer lab, a library and administration offices. Most recently, the Government of the PRC has allocated 100 million vatu in loans for additional classrooms and offices at the Emalus Campus. These accommodate French-speaking Ni-Vanuatu students participating in the Francophone 'Second Chance' program.

Currently, the campus is located in in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The campus has an enrollment of 2,472 students, 34 full time academic staff, 36 part time academic staff, and 98 support and administrative staff.

The following programs have 50% or more degree programmes that are offered in in a face-to-face mode at the Emalus Campus:
- Bachelor of Laws
- Bachelor of Arts (Law)
- Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws (combined programme)
- Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Laws (combined programme)
- Master of Law
- Doctor of Philosophy

3. Nature of the Review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

The team visited the Emalus campus over a two day period. The team met with key staff academic and non-academic leadership, including the following individuals:
- Group Manager Mr. Ruben Markward
- Head of School, School of Law, Professor Eric Colvin
- Deputy Head of School, School of Law, Dr. Sean Donlan
- Director of Pacific Islands Language Institute and Pacific Languages Professor Robert Early
- Student Learning Specialist: Mr. Waisea Tabua
- Librarian, Ms. Elisabeth Leekly
- Campus Life Officer, Ms. Jeanette Tariwowai
- Manager, Community Legal Centre, Ms. Naomi Nawasaitoga
- Accountant, Mr. Buisena Conivavalagi
- HR Officer, Ms. Edwina Stephens
- Coordinator, Student Services, Ms. Naomi Bolenga
- IT Manager, Ms. Nettie Collins

The team reviewed a subset of the tailored for the Emalus Campus and the four related Centers. This information included:
- enrollment data for the current year
- data showing enrollment trends for 2015 to 2018
- enrollment data by gender
- enrollment data by learning modality (face to face, print, online, blended)
- retention data for the Bachelor of Law for 2007 – 2016
- completion data for School of Law by nationality and gender

- pass rates for Emalus campus from 2014 to 2017 [2]
- data on academic staff by program and by seniority (e.g., associate professor, senior/lecturer, assistant lecturer, teaching assistant, part-time academic staff)
- data on support and administrative staff by department and term of employment (e.g., full time, part time, intern, other) and by department and category (e.g., senior, I&J, Hourly, Intern, Others)
- data on the amount of technology resources available at the Emalus campus and four centers
- course catalogue, which includes courses offered at Emalus campus and surrounding centers
- course outlines for all law courses
- pass rates for all off site campuses – Cook Islands, Fiji – Labasa, Fiji – Lautoka, Kirbati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa-Alafua, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu-Emalus
- Report on Curriculum Alignment at School of Law, Emalus Campus
- School of Law Plan for Alignment of Program Graduate Outcomes
- Evidence of the approval of the Bachelor of Law degree and the online/blended Professional Diploma in Legal Practice by the Board of Legal Education in Fiji.
- Evidence of the recognition of the School of Laws courses (except State Constitutional Law or Property) were sufficient to be recognized for admission to the Australian legal profession, if an applicant had completed the course with a grade of at least C+ or a mark of at least 57% in the subject.
- Sample of scholarly and academic related publications including a sample of journal articles from the School of Law Journal, sample of Pacific Languages Institute publications (e.g., the only dictionary for certain languages in the region and *Getting the Basics Right, Quality Primary Education in the North Pacific*)
- School of Law Board of Studies and Board of Assessment Minutes

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[2] The team understood the pass rate data to only reflect the Emalus campus but not the four connected Centers.

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
For a recently approved site. Has the institution followed up on the recommendations from the substantive change committee that approved this new site?	N/A	N/A
Fit with Mission. How does the institution conceive of this and other off-campus sites relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How is the site planned and operationalized? (CFRs 1.2, 3.1, 3.5, 4.1)	USP being a regional institution, the conceptualization and organization of its regional campuses are integral to its mission to serve the Pacific region. The Emalaus Campus reflects USP's mission and values in its structure, operations, and administrative structure. This site is planned and operationalized in similar fashion to all of the regional campuses.	The Emalus campus faces some of the same challenges as the main campus in Suva, including need to continually invest in operational resources (i.e., technology and connectivity and student academic support resources) to support student learning. The team also noted that the campus has key vacancies in the Pro-Vice Chancellor position and transitions in senior leadership for the School of Law.
Connection to the Institution. How visible and deep is the presence of the institution at the off-campus site? In what ways does the institution integrate off-campus students into the life and culture of the institution? (CFRs 1.2, 2.10)	USP is deeply engrained in the Emalus Campus in its teaching and learning, program delivery and on campus culture. The Emalus Campus reflects the USP brand consistently. The team observed that the operations, resources, and materials available to the staff and students is aligned with what is available at the main campus.	The Team noted some challenges faced by the Emalus campus, which seemed consistent with other off-site campuses. The Team notes that USP needs to be particularly mindful of investing in training and professional development for non-academic staff on systems and operations of USP.
Quality of the Learning Site. How does the physical environment foster learning and faculty-student contact? What kind of oversight ensures that the off-campus site is well managed? (CFRs 1.8, 2.1, 2.5, 3.1, 3.5)	The physical environment at the Emalus Campus is open and provides easy access for students to their professors. Academic and operational staff offices are co-located by academic program at the campus which fosters informal interactions along with fairly easy access for formal interactions. Lecture halls are sprinkled throughout the campus giving students a sense of engagement in the entire campus.	The Team noted that the student body, academic and non-academic staff all identified needs for greater infrastructure resources (such as connectivity, study spaces, and more consistent access to Wi-Fi and power) and that the lack of or inconsistent nature of these resources impacted student learning and experience.
Student Support Services. What is the site's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services and other appropriate student services? Or how are these otherwise provided? What do data show about the effectiveness of these services? (CFRs 2.11-2.13, 3.6, 3.7)	The Emalus Campus has one student academic support services position for all 2200 students. The Team noted evidence from academic and operational staff, along with students, of the effectiveness of this position. All members of the Emalus Campus community that met with the team indicated that the resources provided by this	The Team noted that additional student academic support resources have been promised to support the Emalus Campus, but these resources remain unfulfilled. Increasing the resources and capacity of the student academic support staff, as well as improving the coordination of all student

	position were well received and critical to many student successes. Academic support staff also coordinate with the Campus Life staff to align support for the students (i.e., orientations, training on key systems, transitional support for students who arrive outside of the normal schedule).	academic support staff is needed.
Faculty. Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? In what ways does the institution ensure that off-campus faculty is involved in the academic oversight of the programs at this site? How do these faculty members participate in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? (CFRs 2.4, 3.1-3.4, 4.6)	Courses at the Emalus Campus are taught mostly by full time academic staff with some part time staff serving as tutors and markers. The team noted evidence that the academic staff are embedded in the same consistent system of academic oversight, curriculum development and assessment of student learning that permeates throughout all of the institution.	The Team noted that due to the consistency across USP of academic staff's involvement in academic oversight of programs, curriculum development, and assessment of student learning that any areas of need for the wide USP should be reviewed at the Emalus Campus in the future.
Curriculum and Delivery. Who designs the programs and courses at this site? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to those on the main campus? (CFR 2.1-2.3, 4.6)	The Team noted evidence that the program and course development and approval process is integrated with the broader institution's process. The Team noted that due to the regional nature of USP and its student body, course designed at the Emalus campus may be delivered throughout the region. The integration of courses, faculty and students across the region is noteworthy. As a result, the programs and courses are comparable in content and quality and are at times the courses that students at the main campus are receiving online.	The Team noted that due to the integrated nature of course development and delivery across all USP campuses, the recommendations noted for the broader institutions should be reviewed for the Emalus Campus.
Retention and Graduation. What data on retention and graduation are collected on students enrolled at this off-campus site? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to programs at the main campus? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed? (CFRs 2.6, 2.10)	The Team noted evidence of the collection of retention and graduation data at the Emalus campus. The Team notes that aside from enrollment data by semester, other data seems to be gathered by non academic staff upon request of academic staff. The data shows a retention data that is consistent with the main campus.	The Team noted that there is no institution research position at the Emalus Campus. The Institution should seek to ensure that the IR functions at the Emalus and other regional campuses has the same level of training, sophistication and processes as the main campus.

Student Learning. How does the institution assess student learning at off-campus sites? Is this process comparable to that used on the main campus? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results from the main campus? (CFRs 2.6, 4.6, 4.7)	The Team noted that due to the regional nature of USP and its student body, assessment of student learning at the Emalus campus is integrated in the system utilized by the institution.	Due to the system wide integration of the assessment of student learning, the Emalus campus academic staff face the same challenges as the main campus. Recommendations for the main campus should be reviewed at the Emalus campus in the future.
Quality Assurance Processes: How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover off-campus sites? What evidence is provided that off-campus programs and courses are educationally effective? (CFRs 4.4-4.8)	The Institution monitors the regional campuses at the highest level of the institution through the vice president of regional campuses, estates & infrastructure. The Institution has virtual meetings of the regional campus directors multiple times a years so the regional directors can engage with the administrative leadership on policy and ensure quality.	The Team noted that the Institution lacked a systematic way to share data, access data and discuss trends in the regional campuses. The Institution's policies and data analysis should be simultaneously shared, discussed and analyzed with regional campus leadership at multiple intervals throughout the year.

Distance Education Review-Team Report Appendix

Institution: University of South Pacific
Type of Visit: Seeking Accreditation Visit 1
Name of reviewer/s: Laurie Dodge
Date/s of review: March 7 – April 13, 2018

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all comprehensive visits to institutions that offer distance education programs[1] and for other visits as applicable. Teams can use the institutional report to begin their investigation, then, use the visit to confirm claims and further surface possible concerns. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report. (If the institution offers only online courses, the team may use this form for reference but need not submit it as the team report is expected to cover distance education in depth in the body of the report.)

1. Programs and courses reviewed (please list)

    The online courses reviewed were active courses in Spring 2018.

    Selected courses from the following programs were reviewed:

Program	Course
Bachelor of Arts in Education	ED 152 S1 2018 Human Development
	ED 359 S2 2018 Educational Research
Bachelor of Education – In Service (Secondary)	ED 250 S1 208 Curriculum Studies
Bachelor of Arts in History	HY 303 S1 2018
Bachelor of Arts in Law Bachelor of Laws (LLB)	LW 110 Law and Society
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics	LL311 S1 2018 English in the Pacific
Bachelor of Arts in Literature and Language	LL 102 S1 2018 Contemporary Literacy Criticism: Key Terms & Texts I
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology	SO 300 S1 2018 Research Methods in Sociology
Bachelor of Commerce in Official Statistics	OS 301 S1 2018 Introduction to Census Survey Data Analysis
Bachelor of Science in Physics	SC 356 S1 2018 Research Skills Development
USP General Courses (General Education)	UU 100 S1 2018 Communication & Information Literacy
Master of Laws	LW 490 S1 2018 Research Project
Master of Environmental Law	LW 455 S1 2018 Law of the Sea
Postgraduate Diploma in Law	LW 400 S1 2018 Advanced Pacific Legal Systems

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[1] See Distance Education Review Guide to determine whether programs are subject to this process. In general only programs that are more than 50% online require review and reporting.

2. Background Information (number of programs offered by distance education; degree levels; FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs; history of offering distance education; percentage growth in distance education offerings and enrollment; platform, formats, and/or delivery method)

USP began offering distance education in 1970 referred to as Extra Mural Studies. WebCT was introduced as the Learning Management System in 2001 (6 enhanced courses) until 2007 (approximately 70 courses).

In 2006, the university moved to Moodle as their LMS and 340 of USP's 763 courses were available through distance and flexible (blended) delivery mode. At that time, a range of media such as print materials, online learning management systems (Moodle), audio/audiographics and video conferencing, audio/video tapes, CDROMS and DVDs was available for the delivery of distance and flexible courses.

The shift from print and face-to-face modes started in earnest with the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan. In the Plan, the university committed to converting at least 60% of programmes with flexible learning and 30% of programmes through distance education by the end of 2018.

As of April 13, 2018 USP offers 33 Bachelor programs, 2 Masters programs, 4 postgraduate certificate/diplomas and 1 professional diploma through distance education (50% or more of program is offered online).

It is important to note that USP currently admits students to a program only and does not differentiate the specific delivery mode (online or onground). USP is aware of the WSCUC requirement that students must be admitted to a distance education program or on-ground program for data reporting purposes.

See the attachment titled *EFTS on online Courses* for enrollment data,

3. Nature of the review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

The review included in-depth course review of 14 active online courses, syllabi, policies relating to distance education and use of technology, and interviews with academic staff (faculty), students, administrators (Director of the Centre of Flexible Learning), and instructional designers.

Observations and Findings

Lines of Inquiry (refer to relevant CFRs to assure comprehensive consideration)	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
Fit with Mission. How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How are distance education offerings planned, funded, and operationalized?	USP's vast region and mission to "achieving excellence and innovation for sustainable development of the Pacific Island Countries" aligns with its strategic direction in growing programs offered by distance education. USP has budgeted for technological needs for distance education operations (hardware, IT services, LMS, people, etc.) and the Centre for Flexible Learning has oversight of course	

	creation (i.e., instructional designers work with faculty), and professional development.	
	Distance education offerings are part of the Strategic Plan and the goal of 30% of the university's programs being offered via distance education is on target to be completed by the end of 2018.	
	There is a budget for IT support and the Centre but additional resources may be needed for the institution's plan to increase the infrastructure to support fiber optics to ensure all countries have reliable internet service.	
Connection to the Institution. How are distance education students integrated into the life and culture of the institution?	The majority of students take courses by different modes at the same time. For example, a student may take an online course and an on-ground or blended course during the same semester.	Explore options and implement co-curricular opportunities for distance education students.
	All online mode students still engage in up to 20% face-to-face at their regional campus. This means they spend some time on campus. For example, participating in satellite tutorials, attending face-to-face tutorials run by faculty who visit the offsite campus, etc. They also come to regional campuses to use computer labs, access the free wifi, and for examinations.	
	Online courses are available to students via Moodle (refer to CFR 2.12).	
Quality of the DE Infrastructure. Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the site conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?	The University provides online education via the open source software, Learning Management System, Moodle. The University has support staff providing both technical and pedagogical support. Major offsite campuses have technical and leaning support staff and also offers and online IT and Moodle Helpdesk (refer to CFR 4.3.10).	Increase reliable and sustainable internet service (i.e., fiber optics) for students at remote countries to ensure consistent learning opportunities.
	During the Site Visit, students and academic staff shared a need for more consistent internet at remote countries as well as more services in tutoring for online students.	Need to implement a university-wide (each distance education course) approach to meet the US Department of Education requirement of faculty-initiated regular and substantive interaction for distance education.
	Online courses in Moodle employs interactive pedagogies such as *Forum*, *Wiki, virtual chats, web conferencing (Big Blue Button)*. Review of online courses and interviews with students and academic staff revealed inconsistent faculty-initiated regular and substantive interaction. Some distance education courses had active initiation by faculty on academic content, while others seemed to be dependent on the student reaching out to the instructor. This is an area for USP to continue to develop in their courses.	

	CFL provides an orientation, onboarding and ongoing training to staff and students in both face-to-face and online modes (refer to CFR 3.5.16).	
	To ensure ready access to resource materials, all new full-time students are issued a tablet for the duration of their studies (refer to CFR 3.5.12).	
	Resources on Moodle are backed up on external servers, and on the cloud.	
Student Support Services: What is the institution's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services, academic support and other services appropriate to distance modality? What do data show about the effectiveness of the services?	The University provides face-to-face support services at the two offsite campuses (Vanuatu & Samoa), which host a School of Studies (Law & Agriculture, respectively). Students Learning Specialists are located at Alafua, Emalus, Labasa, Lautoka, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga Campuses. All campuses are equipped with a library and computer labs. The Library also has an 'Ask-a-Librarian' reference service by phone and email.	Continue to build tutorial support for distance education students.
	Although the university provides student support services at the campuses listed above, it is important that the university continue to build a stronger technology infrastructure and student support services at all locations. Students expressed a desire for more tutoring and more reliable internet to support their learning and success.	
	Online orientation module is also available to students via Moodle (refer to CFR 2.12).	
	The University as part of the Strategic Plan 2013-2018, developed, implemented and evaluated an Online Student Support (OSS), Framework, which is used to ensure student support is available to all distance education students (CFR 2.10 and CFR 2.10).	
Faculty. Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? Do they teach only online courses? In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? How are faculty trained and supported to teach in this modality?	The University does not allocate full-time faculty specifically to teach online modes. All faculty teach a mixture of face-to-face, online and blended mode, but some would teach more of one mode.	
	The Centre for Flexible Learning (CFL) provides an orientation, onboarding and ongoing training to staff and students in both face-to-face and online modes. CFL's Learning Design and Development (LDD) team provides individualized training to new academic staff on the use of Moodle. Details of the types of training and workshops provided by CFL are presented as CFR 3.5.16.	

	Faculty are required to complete UPS's Post-Graduate Certificate prior to teaching online courses. The CFL staff shared that they provide this formal training through the certificate program but also provide "just in time learning" for academic staff developing and/or teaching online courses.	
Curriculum and Delivery. Who designs the distance education programs and courses? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to on-ground offerings? (Submit credit hour report.)	Faculty and support staff from the University's Center for Flexible Learning (CFL), together develop all online courses together. These are subject to evaluation via Quality Matters Rubrics (see section on Quality Assurance Process), and like face-to-face courses require approval by the Academic Programmes Committee (APC) before approval for delivery. Additionally, there is little to no distinction between the modes of study and the content and resources. Support for comparability across program delivery was provided by review of course outlines for different modes and interviews with academic and CFL staff ensuring that the program and course learning outcomes are the same across modalities. During the Site Visit, academic staff and review of some courses indicated inconsistent rigor in courses.	Continue to improve rigor and quality in online courses
Retention and Graduation. What data on retention and graduation are collected on students taking online courses and programs? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to on-ground programs and to other institutions' online offerings? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed?	The University evaluates all courses and all modes in a similar way, considering the institutional offerings by mode, location, and program. Evaluation of this shows little variation in student performance. The exception is students studying part time, with such students performing less well than their full time counterparts (refer to CFR 1.2.4). The University trialed an online tutor system from Australia to improve this. This proved unsuccessful and the University has now allocated additional funds to appoint student learning supports staff. In addition, the university is offering some programs through a cohort model to increase student retention and graduation rates.	

Student Learning. How does the institution assess student learning for online programs and courses? Is this process comparable to that used in on-ground courses? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results of on-ground students, if applicable, or with other online offerings?	The learning outcomes for online courses are specified in the course outlines, and are the same as for face-to-face courses. All distance students are assessed in the same way, and they all sit the same final examination. The performance of online students is very similar to that for face-to-face. Course outlines for particular courses offered in different modes is provided as CFR 2.1.8. Data was provided for course pass rates disaggregated by delivery mode supporting comparable learning for online and distance education at the course level. For Program Assessment and Program Review, WSCUC will require that overall program learning outcomes be disaggregated by delivery mode for each program that is offered via distance education (i.e., students admitted to a distance education program vs. students admitted to a face-to-face program).	When a program is offered in more than one modality, USP students will need to be admitted to the distance education program or the face-to-face program.
Contracts with Vendors. Are there any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses? If so, do these comport with the policy on *Contracts with Unaccredited Organizations?*	The university indicated that no contracts are held with vendors. Moodle is USP's current learning management software.	
Quality Assurance Processes: How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover distance education? What evidence is provided that distance education programs and courses are educationally effective?	Quality assurance processes are designed specifically for online courses, and validated using the Quality Matters Rubrics (Refer to CFR CFR 1.7.74, CFR 1.7.76 and CFR 1.7.77). The performance of online students is very similar to that for face-to-face, meaning they are as educationally effective as for face-to-face courses. Additionally, there is a Learning Design and Development Framework (CFR 1.7.78) to ensure continuous improvement. As noted previously, USP will need to disaggregate student learning outcomes and other metrics (i.e., student satisfaction) for students in distance education programs (not just courses) and on ground programs.	