This portfolio is presented for consideration for the 2017 Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. This is the second consecutive year that I have been nominated, but I was unable to pursue the nomination in 2016, since I was making my final preparations for sabbatical leave. I am therefore grateful to have this opportunity to submit this portfolio for the 2017 round. I have addressed the criteria in the relevant sections below, with supporting comments for each.

1. Approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn

We often hear that Literature is not an important part of Pacific cultures, and many students come to USP with this preconception. In fact, Pacific cultures have rich and ancient traditions of storytelling and narrative, and although they often do not realise it, most Pacific students have inherited an incredible aptitude for Literary Studies. However, I have found that some of our students do not feel a strong connection to the literature they have previously been exposed to. This is a problem, since many of our USP Literature students will go on to be educational leaders throughout the Pacific region. My basic teaching philosophy, therefore, is that we must not only teach our students the skills necessary for their professions, but also foster a strong passion for the subject, and an awareness of the important role of literature and literacy in the twenty-first century. I use three main approaches to achieve this goal.

Firstly, I introduce texts that students identify and engage with, including literature from all over the Pacific Islands: Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue, and many more. As well as introducing subjects and settings that students will easily recognise and relate to, this shows students that their cultures are valuable, and that literature is one of the ways in which to express, recreate and preserve Pacific cultures. One nominating student writes that this approach improves the learning experience by using ‘relevant resources, local and Pacific . . . which is quite new’. This comment confirms that my Literature courses contribute to the university’s mission of developing ‘Pacific consciousness’.

Secondly, I introduce these texts in a way that makes Literature relevant not only to the students’ degree programmes, but to their future careers and their everyday lives. Relating the texts to the latest theories in Literary Studies, I structure the lectures, tutorials, online activities and assignments around real-world issues to which all students can relate, such as gender inequality, racial difference, religion, and digital media. This approach to critical thinking follows the constructivist, student-led methodology at the heart of modern pedagogy—‘transform[ing] . . . the pre-existing knowledge of . . . learners’—and has been praised by

---

several of my nominators: ‘when it comes to tutorial he tries to listen to students experiences and uses that to make other students learn’; ‘He . . . relates it to the students own experiences’.

Finally, I engage students by always maintaining enthusiasm for the subject, however busy I may be; by always encouraging all students to believe in themselves and their abilities; and by appealing to the communal spirit, presenting the learning process as a collective as well as individual responsibility. This promotes important scholarly values, and fosters a sense of commitment. These nominators’ comments suggest that the approach has a positive impact on students’ learning experience:

- Even when he comes to class he wears a smile that make students feel at home and when he teaches he makes sure all students know what he's teaching and no one gets left behind.
- By explaining to students about the importance of education.
- He usually inspires us that we are all geniuses and everyone is capable of doing great in learning.
- He motivated me through his lecturing methodology, encouraging words and positive or quick responses to our requests.
- He encourages students not to give up and gives motivation to students.

2. Development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field

When I arrived at USP nearly five years ago, I had almost no experience of Pacific literature. This was not an immediate problem, since the courses I taught did not contain a large amount of Pacific material, but I quickly became convinced that the incorporation of more regional material would have a positive effect on our students’ learning (see section 1, above). Since I firmly believe in the modern pedagogical principle that tertiary teaching should be research-led, I therefore felt a responsibility to develop research expertise in the field. While maintaining a strong research profile in my original area of specialism—publishing one A*- and three A-ranked articles in the last four years—I have also worked to expand my research in the area of Pacific Studies. I started small, collaborating with colleagues to present panels at conferences, before being invited to present on Pacific literature at New York University in 2015. I co-organised a major international conference, ‘Oceanic Modernism’, at USP in 2016, and have since worked to develop an international research profile in the field: my first article will appear in the B-ranked Journal of Modern Literature in 2017, and my coedited collection New Oceania is currently under review with the A-ranked publisher Johns Hopkins University Press. This means that our USP Literature students are at the cutting edge Literary Studies, in both its regional and international contexts.

I also ensure that I stay up-to-date with the latest pedagogical research. One of the most significant developments in recent years is Jan H. F. Meyer and Ray Land’s idea of ‘threshold

---

2 E.g. Angela Brew, Research and Teaching: Beyond the Divide (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
concepts”—those elements of a subject that, among the great mass of material that the student is expected to learn, may be considered ‘central to the mastery of their subject’. As Meyer and Land put it, a threshold concept ‘represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress’. For each of the courses that I teach, I establish a small number of threshold concepts (e.g. ideology for LL102, discourse for LL202, intersectionality for LL402), and structure all teaching and learning activities around these core concepts. I begin the course with a whole lecture explaining the importance of the key topic, and explain how all of the elements of the course—from the lectures, to the tutorial activities, to the assessments—relate to the threshold concept. This not only gives the students a clear understanding of the purpose of the aligned activities that they will complete across the semester, it also gives a sense of the bigger picture: the core concept of the course that will transform their future understanding of the programme and the discipline as a whole. A number of comments in my nomination form confirm that students and peer observers value these approaches to teaching, in particular the following:

- After sitting in on one of Dr. Hayward’s classes, I was singularly impressed by his teaching style and particularly his calm, clear and logical method of explanation, as well as his willingness to listen to the students and help them shape their ideas. I have also received a lot of positive feedback on Dr. Hayward’s teaching from my own students.
- Sent links on how to submit assignments, do quizzes on Moodle… sent explanations for the steps to follow in regards to follow up secondary sources. Does thorough research on the topics for better understanding.

3. Approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning

I have observed two major problems that tend to hold USP students back from achieving their potential in Literary Studies. Firstly, many students put off reading the primary texts until it is absolutely necessary (i.e. for the major summative assignments and for the final exam), which prevents them from experiencing the kind of ‘deep learning’ that is so vital to a transformative learning experience. The assessment methods I inherited in my courses were all summative (e.g. major essays), and since some of our students arrive under-confident with their English, and others are not used to the kind of independent and creative thinking that these kind of assessments test, many of them underachieved. What this often meant is that students would proceed for the first half of the semester without realising there was a problem, and then received low marks for their major summative essays, which made them feel inadequate, and put them off the subject at an early stage. I have introduced various measures to work around this problem, including a weekly topical test that both requires students to complete the basic task of reading

---

the set texts (thus better preparing them for the more challenging assignments that will follow), and also assesses them on their comprehension, which is an important step towards critical thinking. This topical test only carries a small amount of marks, but this incentivises the students by showing that if they work hard throughout the course instead of just for specific assignments, they can achieve highly. I also introduced weekly workshops that promote a student-led approach to learning, in which students are both challenged and guided in their journey towards becoming independent and critical thinkers.

The other main problem that has historically held back our Literature students from achieving highly is plagiarism, particularly in the online. The revisions to teaching and assessment methods described above already go some way to resolving this problem, since with more guided, gradual and formative learning students no longer feel the lack of self-confidence and uncertainty that might lead them to plagiarise. But I have also introduced specific measures that have all but eradicated plagiarism in the Literature courses I teach. Firstly, in selecting Pacific texts that are less fully represented in the types of online study guides that students tend to plagiarise, there is a practical obstacle to plagiarism. Secondly, I have designed a small but assessed assignment on discipline-specific citation, which ensures that in their first semester students develop the basic referencing skills expected of them at university level. Thirdly, I have introduced a special lecture on how to conduct research, and how to adapt this research in the planning, drafting and editing stages to create well-cited and professionally presented assignments. And fourthly, I regularly remind students of the necessity of professional academic standards, and establish early on what the penalties for plagiarism will be. In the rare instance where one of my Literature students plagiarises, I correspond with them to explain the problem clearly, and to suggest how they can avoid the same mistake in future. To give a sense of the effectiveness of these methods, in the first year of my teaching at USP, 18% of my online and face-to-face LL102 students failed their first major assignment for plagiarism. In 2017, that figure has been reduced to 3%. No longer feeling the need to turn elsewhere for answers, students have evidently made great progress as independent learners.

This professional responsibility goes both ways, and at the start of each course I establish clear deadlines for my own feedback turnaround. Feedback is always given within 1-2 weeks of assignment submission, and according to the Student Evaluation of Courses [SEC] report for 2016.1, 100% of LL102 students agree that they received helpful feedback on their work. This is particularly important for online students, who tend to disengage if they do not feel as though their work is being carefully monitored. Nomination comments indicate that the feedback and other teaching methods described in this section are effective:

- Timely response and vigilant in teaching.
- Regular feedbacks. Class announcements and Support.
- Whenever he is not satisfied with our work he will give examples so that we get the hint of what is expected from us.
• The assessment used was not overloaded and at the same time well-constructed and his feedback was always fast and understandable for a student to learn independently.
• He always gives us feedback during lectures on our performances during tutorials as well as assignments. Sometimes he sends us messages through Moodle in which we can easily access. Not only that but he always tested us on the topic in what he termed as the weekly topical test.

4. Respect and support for the development of students as individuals

As important as these academic skills are, our graduates also go on to play key community roles, and I believe that the university should help our students to become well-rounded and ethically grounded individuals. There are a number of ways in which I contribute to this goal. I begin by acknowledging to our students that we all come from a diverse range of cultural and educational backgrounds, with different literacy skills, and assure them that all of us are learners—even lecturers. In the face-to-face mode, I promise all students in Week 1 that I will know all their names by the mid-semester break, and use various mnemonic techniques to fulfil that promise. This can be challenging with 150+ students, but in my experience it not only makes it easier to encourage all students to participate, but it also assures all students of their equal worth and importance in the course. For the online mode, I set up a weekly virtual office hour on Moodle (‘chat’ function), and encourage students to ‘check-in’ each week and let me know how they are getting on with the work. I have built some good relationships with regional students in this way.

I also push myself to learn the vernacular languages, not for use in the classroom, but for conversing with students around campus and in online chats. I have found that this helps make students feel comfortable in an unfamiliar university setting, and again gives a sense of the equal importance of all USP members. I can at least greet and thank students from most of USP’s member regions in their vernacular languages, and can converse in iTaukei. My next goal is to develop conversational Fiji Hindi.

That students find me approachable is suggested by the number who come to me in and outside of office hours (both in person and online), to seek counselling, support and advice. I try especially hard to guide students who wish to continue to postgraduate studies, but while it is certainly my belief that the Literature department should foster the next generation of teachers and scholars, I also believe that we should nurture the next generation of Pacific writers. As emphasised by one of our stakeholders in our last Literature PAC meeting, one of literature’s major social functions is to give a voice to the marginalised, and to foster understanding between different cultural groups. These are clearly important goals in postcolonial regions such as ours. Although I do not teach any formal creative writing courses at USP, I strongly encourage students to pursue their creative impulses, and continually show them—through the texts we study—that they too can use literature to make their voices heard. I have read and given feedback on many of my students’ poems and short stories outside of the classroom, and suggested ways in which they might develop their work and see it into publication. In 2017 I also
set up special workshop sessions, in which prominent Pacific writers spoke to students about their experiences and their path to success, which have been well-attended and well-received.

I believe that my respect for all students is demonstrated by the following nominators’ comments:

- He treats everyone equally and knows everyone by names and usually makes conversation with the students as they pass in the corridors.
- Not being racist. Very professional.
- He is quite helpful, approachable and can even speak the I-taukei language
- Dr. Hayward shows a lot of patience, concern and respect for his students when talking to them and this is one of his particular strengths as a teacher.
- He knows how to mentor a student academically and above all with kindness.
- He calls us by name, smiles always when approaching us both during and after lectures or tutorials, talk kindly and willing to respond to us whenever we needed him.
- He treated everyone fairly in tutorials and lectures.
- Dr. Mathew is not only a lecturer but is a very friendly person who understands each and every student.

5. Scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching

Since joining USP I have sought and accepted responsibilities and roles that have helped me to improve the experience of our students—not just of Literature, but of SLAM as a whole. From 2013-15, I was the chair of SLAM’s Student Feedback Forum, appointing student representatives for every SLAM course, and meeting 2-3 times per semester to gain constructive feedback on courses, passing this on for coordinators to address problems they may not have been aware of. This forum received uniformly positive responses from students, as it gave them the sense that their voices were being heard and respected. From 2015, I have served as chair of SLAM’s Learning and Teaching Committee, which among other things has enabled me to take a leading role in the alignment and curriculum mapping of all SLAM courses and programmes. And in 2017, I accepted the position of Discipline Coordinator for Literature, which I see as an opportunity to shape the student learning experience at programme-level. I have found that my close relationship with students ‘on the ground’ enables me to introduce measures that are not only beneficial to the university (e.g. student retention, pass rates, etc.), but which are also genuinely felt by the students themselves, improving the student experience at USP.

Within my own courses, I take an active approach to student feedback, and challenge myself to improve my courses every single time they run, never allowing myself to become complacent. In addition to the university’s SEC feedback, I also use my own, course-specific feedback forms each semester, incorporating suggestions the following year. I believe that this attempt to continually improve is vital. It not only helps us to teach the best courses we possibly
can, but also to continually adapt to changing student needs. And the results show that it has worked. In 2014, the LL102 face-to-face pass rates (excluding EX grades) was 47%, with just 9% of students passing with a B+ or above. In semester 1, 2017, this pass rate has increased to 90%, with 30% of students achieving B+ or above. While the online mode still presents challenges, this too has seen a nearly 50% improvement in pass rates for the years that I have been teaching online.

The 2016.1 SEC feedback shows that 100% of my students agreed that they had a good learning experience for the course. I include below some final comments from this year’s Award nomination, to add detail to these positive figures.

- One of my main reasons for nominating Dr. Hayward is that I have personally received unsolicited feedback on his teaching from my students and he is known throughout the department as a particularly good teacher. I think this should be acknowledged more widely.
- I just wish that all lecturers at USP are like Mr. Mathew.
- Dr. Hayward hands out his own student evaluation forms in addition to the standard university ones in order to regularly assess and get feedback on his teaching.
- Honestly speaking, Sir Mathew is one of the respectful and supportive lecturers I've come across.
- A person being rewarded should be a role model, inspiring, humble and dedicated. These are some of the characteristics of the nominee chosen.

**Final Comments**

I believe that the nominatory comments I have included here reflect the strong commitment I feel towards the education and welfare of our USP students. As an outsider coming into the region, I feel a responsibility to give back, and to help our students develop into the next generation of world-leading teachers, scholars and community leaders.

I find teaching to be its own reward, but I am grateful for being nominated for the 2017 Faculty Teaching Excellence Award, as it assures me that going the extra mile does indeed make a difference to students’ experience. I thank the selection committee for taking the time to consider my portfolio.