2017 Vice-Chancellor’s Prize for Excellence in Teaching—Portfolio

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This portfolio is presented for consideration for the 2017 Vice-Chancellor’s Prize for Excellence in Teaching. Having been nominated for the FALE Teaching Excellence Award for the past two years, I am honoured to have won the award in 2017, especially since I was unable to pursue the nomination in 2016 while making final preparations for sabbatical leave. I am grateful for the opportunity to expand this portfolio for the VC’s 2017 Prize, and have addressed the criteria in the relevant sections below, with outcome-based evidence and supporting comments from the FALE Award nominations and relevant Student Evaluations of Courses (SEC).

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, and a sense that Literature is therefore a difficult subject for them to learn. In fact, Pacific cultures have rich and ancient traditions of storytelling and narrative—from the art of *talanoa*, to the Indian literary and mythical heritage brought to the region during the indenture period—and Pacific students have inherited an incredible aptitude for Literary Studies, even if they often do not realise it. I have found that if some of our students do not feel confident in the subject when they first arrive at USP, it is often because they have not felt any strong connection to the literature they have previously been exposed to. This disconnect is obviously a problem, since many of our USP Literature students will go on to be educational leaders throughout the Pacific region, and will therefore be responsible for developing an interest for the subject in the next generation of Pacific students and scholars. 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 four interrelated approaches to achieve this goal.

Firstly, I introduce texts that students will identify and engage with, including great literature from all over the Pacific Islands—not only the more famous works from Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, but also lesser-known works from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue, the Marshall Islands, and other underrepresented regions. As well as presenting all of our students with characters, subjects and settings that they will easily recognise and relate to, students see from this literature that their cultures are valuable, and as worthy of being memorialised and celebrated in print as the European counterparts that still dominate Literature courses, even in postcolonial regions. In an early interview given to Marjorie Crocombe in the 1970s, Albert Wendt reflected on the damage done to Pacific cultures by the overreliance upon European curricula, and argued that USP had a crucial role to play in repairing this damage: ‘USP is a
unique university in that it has, as students, groups from all over the Pacific. All these young people go to USP, with cultural backgrounds extremely diverse and rich in expressive arts. To ignore this would be a major catastrophe for us'.  

Forty years on, the same challenges face us, and I believe that the Faculty of Arts, Language and Education in general, and the Literature division in particular, have a strong responsibility to contribute to USP’s mission of developing Pacific consciousness.

As Discipline Coordinator for Literature, I have taken an active role in reshaping the programme towards the achievement of this mission. A more detailed account is given below (see Section 2, ‘Development of Curricula’), but I have noted it here to show that the reorientation of core courses towards Pacific content not only helps the university to fulfil the commitments of the 2013–18 Strategic Plan, but also has a strong impact on students’ attitudes towards the subject. I have found that introducing more Pacific texts to my Literature courses has motivated and inspired students to engage with a subject that they had perhaps not previously enjoyed. One nominating student writes that this approach improves the learning experience by using ‘relevant resources, local and Pacific . . . which is quite new’; another student writes in the 2016.1 SEC that the best thing about the course is ‘to read texts from Fiji and other Pacific Island countries and sharing my love for literature’, while another writes that ‘the use of literary texts by Pacific writers is really good, please keep using those’. We have also received uniformly positive responses to the Pacific content from our international students, though for very different reasons: studying literature that they would otherwise not have heard of, they get to immerse themselves more fully in Pacific cultures while studying here in Fiji. This can only be a good thing for the international reputation of the university.

The second way I work to develop students’ passion for the subject is by introduce these texts in a way that makes Literature seem relevant to the students themselves—not only to their degree programmes, but also to their future careers, and their everyday lives. Relating the texts to the latest theories in Literary Studies—and thus maintaining the international standards towards which the university rightly aspires—I structure the lectures, tutorials, online activities and assignments around real-world issues to which all students can relate, such as Pacific identity, gender inequality, racial difference, religion, and digital media. For example, in the first week of the core course LL102 (Contemporary Literary Criticism: Key Terms and Texts 1), I have developed an introductory lecture, ‘What Is Literature?’. Rather than simply proceeding with general definitions, the lecture traces the history of Literary Studies in Oceania, focusing on the role USP itself played in the creation of a new Pacific literature in the 1970s. In this way, students gain a sense of their own place and responsibility in a contemporary Pacific tradition that has produced such writers as Albert Wendt, Subramani and Epeli Hau’ofa, and are encouraged to take pride in their studies at a university that should remain at the centre of Pacific Studies.

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This lecture is followed by a tutorial activity in which students participate in a debate on the question, ‘Is literature relevant in Pacific societies?’ Students thus get to voice and address any doubts they have about the course, while also defending its significance to them and their lives. (Online students are given the same experience, through a specially designed forum activity.) Finally, in that week’s ‘Workshop’ lecture, these issues are addressed through a group analysis of a contemporary Maori text. In this way, students take ownership of the subject at an early stage, and proceed with an understanding of the broader relevance of their studies to themselves and to society. The success of this approach is reflected by student feedback in recent LL102 SECs: ‘The course covers a wide variety of literary texts which has relevance to our society and makes it easier for a student to understand’ (2017.1); ‘The best thing about this course is I studied different topics that explain . . . real experiences in today’s situation’ (2017.1); ‘Effective in terms of . . . applying it in my daily life’ (2016.1); ‘The chosen themes . . . got us to really focus on our thinking and decision making ability and the knowledge on how to interpret the world and the texts and how to see the world through literature’ (2016.1).

These comments show that the students themselves recognise the way in which the course encourages them to develop their critical thinking skills, and point towards the third crucial aspect of my teaching philosophy: that students learn best when they take an active role in their education. This constructivist, student-led methodology is at the heart of modern pedagogy, and rejects the passive learning activities of the traditional university setting. Where students were once expected to silently sit and memorise the lecturer’s lessons, contemporary pedagogical scholarship agrees that student-led activities bring about what Heather Fry et al. describe as ‘transformation to the pre-existing knowledge of . . . learners’. In practice, this means structuring learning activities around the students’ own discussions, providing starting points from the relevant topic, and then building upon the students’ comments and ideas while unobtrusively guiding the discussion towards the key outcomes for the topic and course. This gives students the sense that it is they who have actively discovered new knowledge, an empowering and motivating experience that is essential if students are to succeed in developing USP graduate outcomes such as Creativity, Teamwork and Critical Thinking.

Globally, most leading universities are now oriented towards a constructivist approach to teaching, and it is an approach that plays well to Pacific students’ strengths. The colonial education systems introduced a passive learning model to the region, and these are unfortunately still retained in many of our schools. However, as scholars such as Vilsoni Hereniko and Wendt have argued, this method is incompatible with the learning traditions of the Pacific region, and automatically places our students at a disadvantage. I have found that the constructivist model is far better suited to our students’ habits and heritages of thought, allowing them to learn

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communally and interactively, through discussion and practical application. As such, I replaced one of the two weekly lectures for LL102 and LL202 with a ‘Workshop’ session, in which the class functions as something like talanoa, using relevant analogies and anecdotes, posing questions and introducing activities that allow students to build upon their current knowledge, and then developing the ideas generated incrementally across the semester towards the major assignments and the final exam. This allows our students to learn in a way that answers both their own traditions and modern pedagogy, and it is an approach that students have responded to well. As several students put it in the LL102 SEC (2017.1), ‘Tutorial class was based on student-centred strategy . . . based on how students discuss and share ideas’; ‘lectures and tutorials were always lively, a lot of interaction between lecturer/tutor and students’. Another student in the same report stated that ‘it was so relevant to me as a Pacific islander and I think it’s something that USP should continue to teach and grow’. Several nominators for the 2017 FALE Teaching Award also praised this method of teaching: ‘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 owns experiences’.

Finally, and most simply, 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, while again playing to Pacific students’ strengths and experience. 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.
- Lecture notes posted online and remain there . . . and a lot of encouraging words used in every class time. He always keeps the momentum of the class making sure that the students are active always.

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

When I arrived at USP nearly five years ago, I had very little 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. Since I firmly believe in the modern pedagogical principle that tertiary teaching should be research-led, I set about to develop research expertise in the field, using this to update and improve the Pacific content of my courses. 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 a plenary panel on Pacific literature at the Australia Modernist Studies Network Conference at the University of Sydney in 2014. I was then invited to give a seminar on Oceanic literature at New York University in 2015, and went on to co-organise a major international conference, ‘Oceanic Modernism’, at USP in 2016. In 2017, I have succeeded in converting this research into ranked outputs: my first article will appear in the B-ranked Journal of Modern Literature this year; I have had an article accepted for a special issue of the A-ranked journal Symplokē, focusing on the key role played by USP in the development of Pacific literature in the 1970s and 80s; my coedited collection New Oceania is currently under review with the A-ranked publisher Johns Hopkins University Press; and I have been invited to coedit a special issue (with internationally renowned scholars based at the University of Auckland and the University of Washington) entitled ‘Modernism in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands’.

Developing an international research profile in the field is not only good for the research culture and reputation of USP, but it also ensures that our Literature students are at the cutting edge of Literary Studies, in both its regional and international contexts. Over the last four years, I have incorporated my research in Pacific Studies to increase the Pacific content of our Literature courses by around 60–70%, and our core courses (LL102 and LL202) now boast 100% Pacific content. I have also developed the Pacific content of our postgraduate courses, especially LL401 (Studies in Pacific Literature in English) and LL402 (Studies of Women Authors). These advances are greatly valued by our students: to the nominators’ comments provided in Section 1, above, I would add the following feedback from the LL102 2017.1 SEC: ‘Mathew Hayward, almost felt like he knew exactly what I meant in my queries. He helped me appreciate Literature. He is good at what he does, and his content knowledge is admirable. Couldn’t have asked for a better Course Coordinator’. These advances are also greatly valued by our stakeholders, who explicitly praised these developments in our 2017 Literature Programme Advisory Committee meeting on 7th June, 2017; our transformation of the curricula here is now one of the prominent statements on SLAM’s Literature website, and is helping to make USP a centre for Pacific Literary Studies, in both our teaching and our research.

In addition to the diversification of my own research profile, 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 concepts’—those elements of a subject that, among the great mass of material that the student is expected to learn, may be

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4 See e.g. Angela Brew, Research and Teaching: Beyond the Divide (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
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 ideas from the course that will shape their future understanding of the programme and the discipline as a whole. This makes each course a transformative experience, rather than just a series of marks needed to complete a degree.

This structuring of courses around threshold concepts answers the contemporary pedagogical principle of constructive alignment, defined by John Biggs in his groundbreaking work on the subject as a system in which ‘all the components in the teaching system—the curriculum, . . . the teaching methods used, the assessment tasks—are aligned to each other’. The success of this aligned approach is another aspect that my students have singled out in their nominations feedback:

- Whatever we were taught was mentioned in the course as it was stated in the course outline. All assessment tasks were what was told in the course outline’ (LL102 2016.1 SEC)
- This course has helped me to have a deeper understanding about the concept in Language and Literature and is a very exciting course that does not stray from its outline (LL102 2016.1 SEC)
- Whatever we learnt or were told to learn as per the course outline was followed accordingly. Everything was up-to-date in this course and well applied and adhered to (LL102 2016.1 SEC)
- It was appropriate in the sense that the assessments done was just the things learnt from the lectures (LL102 2017.1 SEC)
- Everything from the outline was taught and it was consistent and done in a professional manner that wasn’t tedious or uninteresting (LL102 2017.1 SEC).

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Finally, I work hard to integrate new technologies into my teaching methods, utilising OERs and developing new methods of teaching in the online mode. I received specific training in OERs and online teaching as part of my admission for Higher Education Academy Fellowship in England in 2012, and I believe that it is here I have made the most progress in my time at USP. In 2013–14, I successfully converted our core courses LL102 and LL202 into the online mode, and have since worked closely with CFL to supervise several other online conversions in the Literature programme; all of the undergraduate courses I teach are now fully available online, using OERs and requiring no print purchases from the students. It has taken some hard work to get to this stage, and I have had to overcome two major challenges to successful online teaching at USP. The first is the unevenness of the technology across our various campuses, which can make it hard to set strict deadlines for the regions with poor connectivity (e.g. Solomon Islands). This is obviously to a certain extent out of our control, but there are still ways that we as coordinators can help to overcome this difficulty, and I have found that ensuring that all learning material is available online before the start of the semester makes a big difference: if students know from the beginning of the semester exactly what they will need to access, read and complete, and when they are expected to do so, it makes it easier for them to work around the slow connectivity and still pass the course successfully.

The other challenge with providing online Literature courses is that the subject necessarily requires a substantial amount of reading, and if students get behind with this then it is very difficult for them to experience the kind of deep learning processes that I have described above. In the face-to-face mode, I have found that students feel a certain amount of accountability to the coordinator and to their fellow students, and with constant reminders can usually be relied upon to keep up with the required reading. In the online mode, without direct interpersonal contact, it is harder to maintain this sense of accountability. Drawing upon recent pedagogy, I have developed several key techniques for working around this difficulty. I have found that it is effective to include small incentives for regular participation, and so I include a weekly quiz on the week’s topics and readings. This carries a small amount of marks, which encourages students to participate, but its main purpose is to ensure that students keep up with the work each week, and do not let it mount up. This method has been singularly successful, and a number of students praise this teaching method in the 2017.1 LL102 SEC:

- The courses online has been very conveniently taken and very helpful the accessibility to and from lecturers as well as the notes and information pertaining the course. The online topical test is a bonus.
- The best thing about this course is the fact that topical test were given every week. I really appreciate it, because it helps to do my readings and recap on the lectures even if I am fully committed on other task or course works.
- The best thing about this course is doing weekly test. I like this part of the course because I get to do a test on the weekly readings and lecture.
As shown by the current pedagogy on online teaching, it is also vital to establish an online community between all users, both the students and the lecturer.8 To achieve this, I make initial contact at the start of the course, and then send messages to all students every other day, updating and reminding them of their upcoming tasks; I set up a ‘Q&A Forum’ for students with questions or problems, and encourage all students to help answer each other’s queries, while maintaining a constant presence there myself; I use Moodle’s ‘Chat’ function to have a weekly Virtual Office Hour, where students can check in and discuss the course with me in real-time; I include a ‘Talanoa Chat Room’, where students can discuss the course informally amongst themselves; and I proactively monitor all students’ Moodle access, each week contacting directly any students who have not logged in that week, thereby building up relationships with at-risk students before it is too late. Establishing an online community in this way helps to engage all students, and it is an approach that has been praised in student feedback: one student in the 2017.1 LL102 SEC writes that the ‘best thing about the course’ is the ‘forum discussions. It was like sending messages on Facebook and waiting for the reply and then again giving in your ideas’.

My online LL102 pass rates have gone up from 41% in 2015, to 71% in 2017 (excluding EX grades), and the percentage of students passing with B+ or above has gone up from 5% to 12.5% in the same period. There is obviously still a long way to go for these results to match the face-to-face pass rates (see below), but the steady progress shows that the techniques I have introduced are working, and I am pleased to see that my nominators and other students have identified these face-to-face and online techniques as some of the strengths of my teaching:

- 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 (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)
- His use of interesting Powerpoints on Moodle, video clips, handouts and group working, debating, group presentations kept students captivated and actively involved in the whole learning process (2016 Faculty Award Nomination)
- His teaching methods make use of a variety of resources including online materials (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)
- He is able to teach with the emerging technology (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)
- Excellent information technology in teaching and learning (2016.1 LL102 SEC)
- All these learning resources helped me to get excellent marks for my studies (2016.1 LL102 SEC)
- All the resources that we were given and provided was really helpful to us especially during our assignments (2016.1 LL102 SEC)

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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 (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)

3. Approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning

The careful alignment of assessment and feedback activities is vital to the constructivist teaching philosophy, and my experience with the STAR programme and the implementation of the RSD framework into all SLAM courses has helped me to ensure that my courses are exemplary in this regard. When I arrived at USP, the assessment methods I inherited in my courses were all summative (e.g. major essays), and since some of our students arrive under-confident in their written English, and others are not used to the kind of independent and creative thinking that these kind of assessments measure, 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 incapable, and put them off the subject at an early stage.

I have introduced various measures to work around this problem. One is the weekly topical test described above, which 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 it incentivises the students by showing that if they work hard throughout the course instead of just for specific assignments, they can achieve highly. I have also restructured the teaching structure to introduce more constructive and informal feedback at each stage of the learning experience. The traditional teaching schedule in the USP Literature programme involves two one-hour lectures per week, each introducing a new topic and a new text, with a single one-hour tutorial to discuss all of this material. Converting one of these lectures into a workshop (see section 1, above), and introducing a wider range of student-led activities in the tutorials, I am able to give continual oral feedback to students on their comprehension and adaptation of the aligned topics and ideas; this is replicated in the online mode through my active moderation of discussion forums. At key points throughout the semester, I provide special assignment-centred workshops, in which the students are guided to transfer the oral skills they have developed through the forums, workshops and tutorials into their written assignments. Student feedback suggests that these techniques have improved the learning experience:

- 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 (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)

- He responds to each students during tutorial which motivate the students to their homework before the tutorials. He gave feedback right away after our forum discussion on Moodle which enables the students to know their weaknesses. He responds to our mails and clarifies our doubts on the spot (2016 Faculty Award Nomination)
- I received feedback on this course sometimes through Moodle, lectures and tutorials. I really appreciated the way in which feed backs are posted through email, Moodle, during lectures and tutorials (2017.1 LL102 SEC)

The other major problem that has historically held back our Literature students from achieving highly is plagiarism, particularly in the online mode. The revisions to teaching and assessment methods described above already go some way to resolving this problem, since, with more guided and formative learning activities, students no longer feel the uncertainty and lack of self-confidence 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. 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. But more importantly, I incorporate learning activities into the course showing students that plagiarism is a self-defeating activity, and help them to develop the independent learning skills that make plagiarism unnecessary. 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. I have also introduced a special lecture to all my courses on how to conduct research at that level, and how to adapt this research in the planning, drafting and editing stages to create well-cited and professionally presented assignments; much of this material has subsequently been adapted by Student Learning Services, for the benefit of all FALE students.

To complement these activities, I regularly remind students of the importance of professional academic standards, both in their programmes and in their future careers, and continually reiterate 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.

I also emphasise good timekeeping, maintaining clear and firm deadlines for all activities, and explaining how important this skill will be for students in their future careers. Although this pushes students to work in a way that they are not always used to, they in fact seem to value this aspect of my teaching: one student used the 2016.1 LL102 SEC to praise the ‘well-planned
timekeeping’, while a student in the 2017.1 SEC writes that the best thing about the course is the emphasis on ‘time management . . . which I can use . . . for my other courses’.

Crucially, I also make clear to students that 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 in the LL102 SEC report for the past two years respectively, 100% and 96% of LL102 students agree that they received helpful feedback on their work. This punctuality on the part of the lecturer is particularly important for online students, who tend to disengage if they do not feel as though their work is being carefully monitored.

The following nominators’ and student comments indicate that my assessment, feedback and other teaching techniques described in this section are popular and effective:

- His constructive feedback on assessed tasks as well as his initiative to go further and help students identify their areas of weakness and common errors helped students work independently to improve (2016 Faculty Award Nomination)
- Regular feedbacks. Class announcements and Support (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)
- Whenever he is not satisfied with our work he will give examples so that we get the hint of what is expected from us (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)
- Always giving our assignments on time with feedbacks that can help us improve (2016 Faculty Award Nomination)
- Dr. Matthew provided excellent feedback that helped me with my future assessments and exams (2016.1 LL102 SEC)
- 1. Topics were well suited to the course, very well explained, and interesting. 2. Due dates for tasks were set well before the rush of the last few weeks. 3. Lectures were well written and very well delivered (2016.1 LL102 SEC)
- Timely response and vigilant in teaching (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)
- Attendance (Not a single time he was absent from his assigned lectures and tutorials) (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)
- The lecturer was very helpful providing quick replies to our questions and helping us keep motivated to pass the course (2016.1 LL102 SEC)
- 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 (2017 Faculty Award Nomination)

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

As a university we are of course responsible for developing academic and other professional skills and values in our students. But our graduates also go on to play key community roles, and I believe that the university is also responsible for helping our students to become confident,
innovative, well-rounded and ethically grounded individuals. There are a number of ways in which I actively 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 different levels of self-confidence in group settings. I assure them that in academia 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 is important to make this effort: 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, whatever their racial, gender or cultural backgrounds. For the online mode, I work hard to establish the sense of online community described in section 2 (above), 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. At the time of preparing this portfolio, I have just received news from one of my top online i-Kiribati students (for whom I provided a reference) that she has passed the interview stage of the British Council IELTS Scholarship, and is waiting to hear whether she will be sponsored to proceed for face-to-face study in Australia, New Zealand or the Pacific Islands: she has emailed me with the good news, stating, ‘I wouldn’t have been able to reach this far without your help’. I believe that all of our online students should be supported in this way, and use a range of means to contact students who are not logging in regularly or who are missing weekly assignments: Moodle, phone, and even Facebook can be used to contact students who do not often check their emails, and I also work closely with SLS and our First-year Experience Coordinator to reach out to at-risk students.

I have also pushed 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—which is especially important for our students in the rural areas and in the regions, who may not have experience of a large institution such as ours. Languages do not come easily to me, but I can now read, write and converse in iTaukei Fijian, and can at least greet and thank students from each of USP’s member regions in their vernacular languages, including Fiji Hindi. My next major goal is to develop Fiji Hindi to a conversational level. 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 support students who wish to continue on to postgraduate study, and in 2017 have been responsible for guiding 60% of our current postgraduate cohort into their Literature programme. The following 2017 Faculty Award nominators’ comments show that these efforts are appreciated by students:

- He is quite helpful, approachable and can even speak the I-taukei language.
• 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 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.
• He did not discriminate and was very friendly and punctual.
• He listens and should we need help individually, he would make any time possible to be there for us.
• A very well-mannered lecturer who puts his students first and is always supportive in any way possible, even out of class.

It is certainly my belief that the Literature department should foster the next generation of teachers and scholars, but I also believe that we should nurture the next generation of Pacific writers. As emphasised by one of our stakeholders in our 2017 Literature Programme Advisory Committee meeting on 7th June, 2017, 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 Pacific 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. In fact, I am proud to see that one of my former postgraduate students has recently had her first short story published; this semester, we have incorporated her published work into our LL202 reading list, and we expect her to go on to become one of the Pacific’s leading authors.

It is pleasing to see that my respect for others is noticed by the students themselves, as demonstrated by the following comments. (All are from the 2017 Faculty Award Nomination, except where stated otherwise.)

• 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.
• Dr. Mathew is not only a lecturer but is a very friendly person who understands each and every student.
• He understands what students feel and he always gives them his helpful tips to support them.
• Addressing them politely always, never passes negative comments or giving names but deals with students professionally.
• The learning and teaching that was taking place was good and brilliant there was nothing that was lacking in the way we were being taught by our lecturer. Everything was specific to us and were understood by us (2016.1 LL102 SEC)
• The lecturer was flawless in his work and his lectures and tutorials were lively and very well on point. I loved every minute of the time I spent on the course (2016.1 LL102 SEC)
• The lecturer - Dr. Matthew Hayward is a great lecturer and tutor. He simply made everything easier to understand - the lectures, the assessments & the final exams (2016.1 LL102 SEC)
• I really like this course cause it is too interesting and especially the tutor is a responsible kind and care tutor. He always care about all the student and try to do his best way in order to help all his student pass the course. He did good in his job (2017.1 LL102 SEC)
• Matthew is very helpful. He enjoys helping people. He ask me whether I am Okay with the my work especially my assignment (2017.1 LL102 SEC)

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

I brought a range of competencies with me to USP, with a tertiary teaching qualification (Durham University Learning and Teaching Award), Higher Education Academy Fellowship, and having taught across various modes at a number of British universities. However, it is at USP that I have really developed my teaching skills, and I have from the start sought responsibilities above and beyond what is expected from me at the Lecturer level. It is these roles that have helped me to improve the experience of our students across SLAM as a whole.

Since 2015, I have served as Chair of SLAM’s Learning and Teaching Committee, representing the school at the faculty level, with responsibility for the whole range of activities required under the university’s QoT Policy. These include supervising course proposals and course conversions, supporting programme alignment, considering student matters, providing support for probation students, supporting staff with peer observation, and monitoring grade reporting at assessment board meetings. In this capacity I have taken a leading role in the alignment and curriculum mapping of all SLAM courses and programmes, conducting this in full for the school in 2015; I am now again updating curriculum maps as we work towards WSUSC accreditation in 2018. At the start of 2017, I also 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. I have been working closely with our other course coordinators to introduce some of the innovations from my own teaching, described in this portfolio, into our other Literature courses. This work has been noticed by my peers, with one nominator in the
2016 FALE Award nominations stating that ‘Dr. Mathew Hayward is an inspirational educator whose dedication to improving the learning of his students deserves to be recognized’.

I am dedicated to improving the learning of our students, not only in my own courses, but across the whole school. From 2013–15, I was the chair of SLAM’s Student Feedback Forum, appointing student representatives for every SLAM course, meeting across the semester to gain constructive student feedback, and then working with coordinators to incorporate feedback into our courses. This forum received uniformly positive responses from students, giving them an active role in the shaping of their education, and a sense of constructive interaction with the school: one student praised this activity in last year’s Faculty Award Nomination, stating that I ‘improved teaching and learning’ by ‘forming a Student Representative for every . . . unit’.

It is our responsibility as a university to continually improve the education that we offer our students, and I take an active approach to student feedback to this end, challenging myself to improve my courses every single time they run, and 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 valuable suggestions in the following year. One of my nominators this year drew attention to this practice—‘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’—and a number of the successful techniques and innovations described here in the portfolio have their basis in this process of self-reflection and improvement.

This effort to continually improve not only helps us as a university to offer the best courses we possibly can, but it also enables us to continually adapt to changing student needs. The results show that it is working. 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 face-to-face and online LL102 students agreed that they had a good learning experience for the course; in 2017.1, 96% said the same. I include below some final comments from the Faculty Award Nominations and SECs, to add detail to these positive figures.

From 2017 Faculty Award Nominations

- 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.
- 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.

From 2016.1/2017.1 LL102 SEC

• I had a fantastic and a great experience while doing this course and I am really glad that I choose this unit as my course for this semester
• I enjoyed learning new things in this course because the lecturer was very helpful in clarifying the new topics that most students found difficult to understand.
• The lecturer was good in his teachings and lectures even up to tutorials and it was an amazing experience to have been part of LL102
• The best course so far. Got the mind functioning every moment
• Best course I did this semester
• I've never had much of a good or great rather, learning experience in my life, this course has really made my passion for Literature even stronger.

Final Comments

I hope that the student and other nominatory comments I have included here reflect the strong commitment I feel towards the education and welfare of our USP students. Having joined USP from outside of the region, I feel a strong responsibility to give back by working to give our students the very best education I can, and to help them develop into the next generation of world-leading teachers, scholars and community leaders.

I find teaching to be its own reward, but I am very grateful to have received the 2017 Faculty Teaching Excellence Award, especially 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 this expanded portfolio for the 2017 Vice-Chancellor’s Prize.