

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
for Reaffirmation of Accreditation
to The University of the South Pacific
April 22-25, 2025

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2023 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

Table of Contents

Section I – Overview and Context	3
A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History	3
B. Description of Team’s Review Process.....	4
C. Institution’s Reaffirmation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence.....	5
Section II – Evaluation of Institutional Report	7
A: Response to Previous Commission Actions	7
B: Institutional Essays.....	15
Standard 1 - Defining Institutional Mission and Acting with Integrity	15
Standard 2 - Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success	17
Standard 3: Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures	22
Standard 4 - Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement	31
Subsection C: Reflections - Synthesis of Insights as a Result of the Reaffirmation Process	34
Subsection D: Compliance with 2023 WSCUC Standards	36
Section IV – Commendations and Recommendations.....	40
Appendices.....	42
A. Federal Compliance Forms	42
1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form	42
2. Marketing and Recruitment Review Form	43
3. Student Complaints Review Form	44
4. Transfer Credit Policy Review Form	45
B. Distance Education Review	46
C. Off-Campus Locations Review, as appropriate	56
1. Lautoka	56
2. Samoa Campus	61
3. Solomon Islands.....	67

Section I – Overview and Context

A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History

Established in 1968 and enacted by a Royal Charter granted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1970, The University of South Pacific (USP) is a comprehensive university with the mission to “Influence Pacific Islanders through the pursuit of excellence in knowledge by providing world-class education and research that improves the lives of individuals and communities.” A geographically expansive institution, USP is jointly owned by its 12 member countries – the Cook Islands, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu, the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of Vanuatu, Samoa, and the Republic of Fiji – spanning thousands of miles of ocean. Consistent with its multinational nature, USP is governed by a Council, which includes representatives from the twelve member countries, Australia, New Zealand, the USP Senate, and USP staff and students. The Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is also a member. The legal basis for USP’s operation with and for its member countries is outlined in the Convention, the agreement between the University as a legal corporate entity and its member countries. The vice-chancellor and president (VC&P) is the executive head of the university.

As of 2024, USP offered 307 programs spanning bachelors, masters (professional and academic), and doctoral degree programs, postgraduate and professional diplomas and certificates via six schools¹ and pre-degree studies and vocational training through its Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) unit. Programs are offered in face-to-face, online, blended (hybrid), and print² modalities via the main campus, Laucala, in Suva, Fiji and six additional off-campus locations: Lautoka (Fiji), Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Niue. Program offerings, including those delivered via distance education, vary by location. As part of this review, team members visited the Lautoka, Samoa, and Solomon Islands locations. Associated reports as well as a Distance Education report are appended. USP maintains registration with the national agencies responsible for higher

¹ School of Law and Social Sciences; School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education; School of Information Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Physics; School of Agriculture, Geography, Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences; School of Accounting, Finance and Economics; School of Business and Management.

² USP is clear that correspondence study is not within WSCUC’s scope. A member of the Senior Management Team confirmed with WSCUC that USP is in the process of and committed to closing out all correspondence study.

education in the region. These are the Higher Education Commission of Fiji, Tonga National Quality and Accreditation Board, Samoa Qualifications Authority, and the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority. USP is also in communication with the Solomon Islands Tertiary Education Skills Authority, a relatively new regulator in the region.

As of the 2024 academic year, USP enrolled 14,696 student FTE with approximately 64% of these FTE in undergraduate programs, 9% in postgraduate/graduate programs, 25% in Pacific TAFE, and 2% undeclared. The student body was majority female (61%). A majority of students (~55% FTE) were enrolled at the Laucala campus in Suva, Fiji, with the second largest enrollment in the Solomon Islands (~17%), and third in Vanuatu (~9%). The remaining enrollment (~19%) was distributed among the 11 other member nations and/or campuses. Fifty-six percent (56%) of students were enrolled at a distance.

In 2018, USP was granted initial accreditation for a period of six years. In November 2022, USP submitted an interim report to WSCUC to address the following four issues: (1) upcoming leadership changes (e.g., president, deputy vice chancellor, and vice president), (2) improvements in internet connectivity, (3) the possible expansion of new campuses, and (4) development of post-graduate outcomes and demonstration of significant improvement in assessment practices across all programs. The report was received by the Interim Report Committee, which issued three follow-on recommendations. USP's progress on these is addressed further below. This is USP's first reaffirmation review. The Accreditation Visit (AV) did not include any special follow-up related to substantive change.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The team conducted the review following WSCUC's standard Institutional Review (IR) Process. An Offsite Review (OSR) was conducted on October 29, 2024. Lines of Inquiry (LOI) were produced with USP submitting requested additional materials on March 4, 2025. The team undertook the AV to the main campus (Laucala) in Suva, Fiji, from April 22-25, 2025. Visits to three additional locations took place as follows: Solomon Islands, March 24-26, 2025; Samoa, April 17, 2025; and Lautoka, Fiji, April 22, 2025.

The team prepared carefully and systematically for the OSR and AV. For each stage of the review process, team members reviewed the relevant USP materials (i.e., the institutional report and evidentiary appendices or

additional materials), with each member summarizing their observations in the WSCUC provided worksheet. The team then discussed the completed worksheets as a group, identifying institutional strengths and areas for further inquiry as a basis for conversation with USP stakeholders during the AV and/or visits to USP additional locations.

For both the AV and visits to the additional locations, team members conducted structured meetings with select campus constituents, including faculty (“academic staff” in USP parlance), staff, students, and administrative leadership. During the AV, team members also met with alumni, members of industrial and program advisory committees, and representatives of the Executive Committee of USP’s Council. Meetings were organized to gather information and insights bearing directly on USP’s compliance with the WSCUC Standards as reflected in USP’s unique institutional context and mission. Preparation for the AV involved the development of a preliminary draft of the team’s report based solely on written materials provided by USP, including additional documents requested from the institution, without final conclusions or judgments. The AV concluded with the exit meeting in which the team communicated its commendations and recommendations.

To ensure all aspects of USP’s institutional report—and related review requirements—were considered, pairs of team members assumed responsibility for specific components of the review, leading the team’s analysis and summarizing the group’s conclusions in draft sections of the team’s report. To put their own responsibilities in context, all team members read USP’s institutional report in its entirety. Team members also read and edited the final team report. As such, this report represents the team’s collective understanding and evaluation of USP.

C. Institution’s Reaffirmation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

In keeping with the 2023 Handbook, USP’s institutional report included all the components required for a review conducted under the standard institutional review process. With 12 member countries of diverse geographies, politics, and cultures, USP is an extraordinarily complicated institution. The report described the institution as a whole, offering a high-level overview of the university’s academic and administrative organization, policies, and practices and an associated analysis of its compliance with the standards considering its unique context and mission. Data and visuals used throughout the report, as well as evidentiary appendices, provided support for

USP's conclusions. Additional materials provided by USP helped the team better understand the finer structure of USP, including the size and modalities of enrollments from its member countries, the programs and courses offered at its additional locations or supported by local campuses, and the success of these students. Visits to the additional locations further clarified the relationships of these campuses to the Laucala campus in Suva, Fiji, including the experiences of their students, staff, and faculty. Commendably, the report opened with an executive summary that presented findings from USP's self-study, including the university's key strengths, areas for improvement, and key initiatives and future directions. The team found these conclusions reasonably substantiated via analysis and evidence provided in the body of the report and appreciated this helpful orientation to the institution.

The institutional report was developed by the USP WSCUC Reaffirmation Team, which included the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) for Education, a member of the DVC's staff, and the staff of the Curriculum Development and Review Unit (CRDU). Accreditation officers from the CRDU facilitated conversations with each of four workgroups, one per standard, to collect information, data, and evidence. The Reaffirmation Team worked under the oversight of the Senior Management Team (SMT; the VC&P, three deputy vice chancellors, the chief operating officer, and heads of USP's six schools), which approved final drafts of the report before submission. USP submitted a first report in August 2023. Development of this report was initiated under the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation but was ultimately drafted and submitted under the 2023 WSCUC Handbook of Accreditation. Following discussion of this first report, the team concluded USP needed additional time to address more fully the expectations of the 2023 Handbook. Following guidance from the review team, USP submitted a revised report in August 2024. As the team confirmed during the visit, campus constituents were invited to review the draft report with their input informing the final submission.

In sum, the team found the institutional report to accurately portray the condition of USP as understood by its stakeholders and as confirmed through discussions during the AV. USP clearly took the accreditation review process seriously, using it as an opportunity to develop greater awareness of its strengths and areas for future focus. The nature of USP's inquiry confirms USP's commitment to honest and open communication with the Commission (CFR 1.8).

Section II – Evaluation of Institutional Report

A: Response to Previous Commission Actions

In its July 2018 action letter conferring initial accreditation, the WSCUC Commission identified seven areas for further attention and development. In its February 2023 action summary, the Interim Report Panel (IRP) identified an additional three. A summary of how USP has addressed these recommendations follows.

Commission Action Letter (CAL): *Reduce vacancies in key leadership and academic and non-academic staff positions, using flexibility in hiring practices. (CFR 3.1, 3.8)*

At the time of the initial accreditation, USP had vacancies in a number of key leadership positions, including heads of schools and directors of regional campuses. USP was also positioned to hire a new VC&P. Under the new VC&P, who was appointed in 2019 for a renewable five-year term, the university was significantly restructured, reducing the number of schools from 17 to six with a commensurate reduction in academic leadership positions. As of the 2025 AV, about half (5) of the SMT positions (11) are acting appointments, with two members simultaneously holding two appointments; the head of the School of Business and Management is also the acting deputy vice-chancellor and vice-president for research and innovation, a position held since October 2023, and the head of the School of Information, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Physics is the acting head of the School of Agriculture, Geography, Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences. Of the 12 directors of regional campuses, seven are permanent, three are acting, and two are officers in charge. With respect to faculty and staff positions, it is difficult to determine USP's success in this regard as clear data could not be provided. The Recruitment and Appointments Policy, however, has been revised to make the faculty recruitment process more flexible and efficient.

CAL: *Invest in information technology resources and connectivity to meet the needs of current students and facilitate the planned expansion of distance education delivery. (CFR 3.5)* **IRP: *Develop metrics to evidence how well all the various technological advancements are working including feedback from end users like students, faculty and staff. By way of a quantitative example albeit not in any way prescriptive, internet connectivity for a campus can be measured, in part, in downtime (e.g. number of events/months without connectivity; average length of an outage).***

In its February 2023 action summary, the Interim Report Panel commended USP for its “Significant investments in new technologies and infrastructure and workshops related to teaching technologies” and recommended USP “Develop metrics to evidence how well all the various technological advancements are working including feedback from end users like students, faculty and staff.” As of the AV, USP has in place systems to track service statistics for key network devices and server systems as well as Helpdesk requests and the timeline for resolution of those requests according to service level agreements. Data on student and staff user experience are gathered via surveys, including the 2022 Learning and Teaching Survey, which inform Information Technology Services (ITS) operational planning.

Survey data, as well as reports available onsite, indicate that ITS has provided adequate academic support in the areas of physical set-up of on-campus computer labs (to include procurement, training, service, and replacement cycle), 24/7 support services, security, and effective delivery to all 12 countries via submarine fiberoptics and/or satellite. With increasing numbers of students attending online courses “load issues” have been reported that ITS is addressing. More generally, in response to student feedback ITS has (a) engaged in on-going training of students, faculty, staff, (b) increased power stations on campuses, and (c) increased options for students to borrow or to purchase affordable devices. At regional campuses, ITS student interns were seen as valuable assets by students and campus employees. In sum, ITS has instituted a robust system of monitoring its services and responding to address concerns accordingly.

CAL: Significantly improve the assessment of student learning outcomes, including the use of direct evidence to assess student achievement of undergraduate program learning outcomes and post-graduate outcomes. The results of the assessment of student learning outcomes along with pass rates and grades will measure student success. The university should demonstrate student achievement of the seven graduate outcomes across all undergraduate programs. (CFR 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6) IRP: Clearly demonstrate how course level assessment results are being used for program improvement.

Within the last several years, and with the support of an external consultant, USP undertook a systematic review of each program’s curriculum. As part of this work, course learning outcomes were revised and aligned with

program and graduate outcomes and assignments were redesigned to elicit student demonstration of course outcomes. Ongoing oversight of this alignment is managed by discipline coordinators (department chairs), who, every semester, review course syllabi (outlines) to ensure outcomes and assessments are aligned to the course learning outcomes and geared to the right level of learning. Likewise, discipline coordinators review exam questions prior to mid-term and final exams as well as sample a set of completed exams. Within schools, deputy heads of schools for teaching and learning oversee these processes for the disciplines via the Discipline Board of Studies, which discusses plans related to teaching, learning, and curriculum, including new and revised courses and programs and action plans stemming from program review. As the team learned during the visit, learning outcome results have been used to revise curriculum. For example, in the education program, lower-level curriculum has been revised with the goal of strengthening student performance in higher-level courses.

During the visit, USP staff reported that routine assessment of program learning outcomes, as well as graduate outcomes, is a gap in USP's quality assurance practices. That said, the team was heartened by the clear commitment to addressing this need and strongly encourages USP to take this next step, which builds directly on the curriculum work and oversight practices described above.

CAL: Demonstrate appropriate rigor in degree programs exemplified, for example, in the grading scale and complexity of assignments reflecting a progressively challenging curriculum. (CFR 2.1)

The 2018 WSCUC Visting Team found, in a review of syllabi, a significant reliance on quizzes, tests, and labs, with fewer examples of sophisticated or increasingly complex assignments across course levels. This observation was supported by reports from USP students that rigor could be improved at the post-graduate level especially as it related to support for high-quality research. The team also noted that USP's grading scale shifted relative to standard practice in US institutions (although it is consistent with practices in Australia and New Zealand). For instance, USP students can pass a course having earned 50% of the available points. Likewise, an A+ is awarded for earning 85-100% of the points available; a range which would include a grade of B for most US institutions.

Although USP's grading scale remains unchanged, as described above, USP recently reviewed the curriculum of all programs, aligning courses, programs, and graduate outcomes and revising course assignments to ensure they

address course outcomes. As confirmed through a review of sample syllabi from two programs, the result is an increasingly challenging curriculum as students' progress through a program. Continued attention to this alignment is the responsibility of discipline coordinators who review course outlines, assignments, and assessments every semester. Additional quality assurance is provided by the need to ensure compliance with the qualification frameworks promulgated by USP's member countries.

CAL: Develop institutional research throughout the regional campuses to include disaggregated data, standards of performance and internal and external benchmark comparisons. (CFR 4.2)

USP has built out its business intelligence capacity, adding a data warehouse and Power BI dashboards and reporting tools. Due to licensing limitations, dashboard access is currently limited to select university representatives, including the SMT. As a result, staff at regional campuses do not currently have direct access to data, although data reports, for instance, admissions and enrollment data, may be shared. For end users who had prior access to data, this transition has been frustrating. Looking forward, it will be important for USP to determine how to provide staff with access to data as well as professional development in the use of data in assessment and planning as a necessary step in its efforts to strengthen student services and support, and to grow enrollment.

CAL: Ensure 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 distance education programs or to face-to-face programs to ensure comparability of programs using metrics of student success such as student learning outcomes, retention, graduation rates and student satisfaction. (CFR 2.5)

At USP, distance education courses are designed to ensure faculty-initiated regular and substantive interaction takes place. As confirmed by a review of syllabi, both synchronous (e.g., direct instruction, question and answer sessions, weekly faculty-student consultations) and asynchronous (e.g., discussion boards) methods are enabled via Zoom (and satellite internet, where needed) and Moodle, USP's learning management system. While support for developing interactive, engaged distance education courses is provided by the Centre for Flexible Learning (CFL), which offers a suite of professional development activities in online, blended, and in-person

modalities, observations at regional campus visits revealed that CFL could do much more to strengthen the skills of faculty and lecturers offering online courses.

USP currently tracks student enrollment by course rather than program modality. As a result, the university is unable to compare the success of students in distance education and onsite, face-to-face programs. Nevertheless, faculty and leadership broadly understand that learning results for students at a distance are generally not the same as those for onsite students and that students in distance education courses generally pass at lower rates than onsite students. Looking forward, it will be crucial for USP to develop the capacity to disaggregate data on student learning and student success by program and modality to ensure equivalent experience, success rates, and outcomes across modalities.

CAL: Expand the 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)

In addition to the CFL, USP has established the CRDU, which facilitates USP's quality assurance processes, including assessment, program review, compliance with member country qualifications frameworks, and institutional and programmatic accreditors, by providing faculty with administrative support and expertise. Among its responsibilities, the CRDU is charged with providing training and professional development opportunities for staff on curriculum-related topics. This is done largely by bringing in consultants as well as consolidating and communicating existing opportunities offered elsewhere at USP. To better enable student learning and success, USP is considering eliminating fully online courses and offering instruction exclusively in hybrid (blended) and onsite modalities. This transition will require courses to be redesigned and provide an opportunity to offer faculty additional support in pedagogy and instructional design.

Regarding the use of data in planning and decision making, despite significant advances in USP's data systems, data are not readily available to the USP community beyond the SMT, including faculty. As noted above, it will be important for USP to make data broadly available to the USP community and provide professional development to support effective use of data in program assessment, planning, and decision making.

IRP: *Demonstrate the alignment between planning for and the actual launch of the Solomon Islands campus. For example, did USP meet the timeline to become operational; were degrees planned for being offered; does the campus have the intended technological infrastructure; does the budget align with staffing and technological needs?*

Following construction delays created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the new Solomon Island campus opened on October 3, 2024. Despite being open less than a year, demand for instruction is such that the campus is already at capacity. The facilities provide space for students enrolled in a broad range of courses through face-to-face, hybrid (blended), and fully online modalities with larger enrollments in Chemistry, Accounting and Finance, Economics, Management and Public Administration, Social Sciences, Education (teacher preparation), Business (MBA), and Foundation Studies with a large population of students in Pacific TAFE. Programs offered by the School of Agriculture, Geography, Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences are housed on the original campus, about five miles away. Every Solomon Islands student is taking one or more distance education courses, either fully online or hybrid, which are offered from main campus or one of the other regional campuses.

The new campus is a vital and busy hub for students from as early as 6 a.m. until closing around 8 to 9 p.m. With limited access to electricity and internet at home, many USP students arrive early to campus to access courses, study and complete assignments, and charge devices. Upon realizing the extent of this demand, USP quickly modified space use plans adding more computer labs and increasing student study areas with electrical outlets both indoors and in sheltered outdoor spaces. The new campus is net-zero, providing ample electricity for teaching and student needs, and per the facilities manager they could (if Honiara was able to) feed power into the city's electrical grid. Like the new campus, the older campus is also filled with students throughout the day. It is currently undergoing renovations to increase space for science labs, computer labs, and student study, again with additional electrical access points.

In addition to the campuses in Honiara, USP supports two instructional centers on different islands where students can access online courses, meet with student services, meet with visiting faculty or instructors who travel to the center, and sit for in-person exams. While faculty travel to these sites, students at these locations reported

they would like the ability to connect with students in-person at the Honiara campuses but that would require resources for travel and lodging. It was also noted that there are remarkable cultural and environmental science community-based USP programs in the Solomon Islands that were not affiliated with the campus. The staff who led these USP Outreach programs commented that they would like to be better networked with the Honiara campus where they could provide their expertise and services directly to students and staff.

The Solomon Islands campus has a small staff, including an interim director, four on-site instructors, library staff, IT staff, and other support staff who can meet the needs of students through face-to-face attention as well as connecting students to online support services, the majority of which are offered by Laucala campus in Suva, Fiji. Given the growth in student enrollment at the Solomon Islands campus, there is a need for in-person/on-site additional staffing at both the new and older campus. There is also a need for campus staff to be oriented to the collection, analysis, and use of data, e.g., student learning outcomes, enrollment, fiscal, etc., to strengthen site-base planning and decision making. Additional details regarding the campus' programming, infrastructure, and resourcing is provided in Appendix C.

Major Changes since the Last Accreditation Review

Since its initial accreditation, USP has undergone significant changes following the appointment of the new VC&P in 2019. As noted above, the university undertook a major academic reorganization, shifting from 17 schools housed within three faculties to six schools, with commensurate changes to representation on the SMT. At the same time, existing research institutes were integrated into relevant schools to foster closer alignment between research and teaching activities. In 2024, with funding from New Zealand, the Centre for Sustainable Futures was established to bring together four existing centers and associated programs to strengthen, synthesize, and scale USP's research collaboration capabilities in support of climate finance and resilience knowledge.

Since 2019, USP has experienced significant declines in enrollment from a high of 20,775 FTE in 2019, 71% of which were Pacific TAFE FTE, to 13,139 FTE, 75% of which were Pacific TAFE. About two-thirds of the decline took place between 2022 and 2024. Declines were observed in a majority (9) of member countries, including Fiji from

which most students come, but not all. For example, Solomon Islands FTE increased by 498 FTE (126%) over the last two years.

USP has identified a host of factors contributing to this decline. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Fiji withheld scholarship support for pre-degree students between 2019 and 2023, which directly impacted student abilities to afford an education. A number of regional, longer term trends are also operating, including a reduction of the student pool due to migration of students and families to countries like Australia and New Zealand, labor mobility schemes offered by Australia and New Zealand, which encourage prospective students to prioritize immediate work over higher education, and increased competition for students due to growth in the number of national and private universities in member nations³ as well as the rise of alternative education options, such as online courses and micro-credentials. Lastly, USP determined that some USP programs may have become less attractive because of perceptions that curricula were outdated and not fully aligned with job market demands.

To address these challenges, USP has developed a tactical response framework focused on recruitment, conversion, retention, the student experience, curricular innovation, and the use of data analytics to inform planning and decision making. This is being led by experienced staff who report directly to the chief operating officer (COO) and who collectively bring expertise in strategic development and implementation, communications, marketing and promotions, student services, and other key support. During the AV, the team was pleased to hear that a primary institutional research unit was being developed. Underpinning this is also a focus on more efficient use of resources toward a sustainable future for USP (CFR 3.4).

To address regional needs and emerging fields, 39 new academic programs have also been implemented (CFR 2.2). These include six bachelor's and two master's degrees as well as a variety of diplomas and certificates (including post-graduate) offered by the schools and Pacific TAFE. Additional information about USP efforts to build enrollment in support of financial sustainability is discussed in Subsection B: Standards 2 and 3 of this report.

³ Five USP member countries have now a total of seven national and private universities compared to four in 2018

A final major change has been the emergence of higher education regulators in USP member countries, five⁴ of which now require USP to undergo regular audits by their higher education commissions. USP has devoted resources to addressing this need, including one staff member in the Quality and Planning Unit and additional administrative support for gathering, organizing, and archiving materials in the CRDU (CFR 2.4, 4.5). Nevertheless, these reviews are administratively demanding and pose significant resource challenges for USP. At this time, it is unclear if remaining member countries will adopt similar regulatory frameworks but, if so, USP will face increasing demands on time and talent to ensure and document compliance.

B: Institutional Essays

Standard 1 - Defining Institutional Mission and Acting with Integrity

Institutional Purposes

Since the last accreditation review, USP revised its vision, mission, and values to better reflect changes in the region, embedding in its statements regional values and culture that tie the institution to contributing to the public good of South Pacific island nations. This focus permeates the full range of USP's endeavors and is to be kept front and center within the institution's policies (CFR 1.1). For example, USP has embedded its vision, mission, and values in its strategic plan, which identifies five priority areas (education; research, innovation, and partnerships; regional campuses and global engagement; regional cooperation through the CROP Network; and governance and intelligent use of resources) and associated objectives and initiatives that align directly to its mission (CFR 1.1). In the area of research, innovation, and partnerships team interviews and review of documents revealed an increase in research outputs and that these efforts are increasingly being incorporated into courses to enhance student learning especially at the graduate student levels. Additionally, more faculty are partnering with external organizations and other institutions of higher education (e.g., New Zealand, Australia, Hawai'i) on local and regional issues, such as, climate resiliency, and conversations are beginning to expand research and partnerships opportunities more globally (CFR 1.1, CFR 1.2). Over time, this strategic priority area as well as others will bring to light how USP's

⁴ Fiji, Sāmoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu

commitments "live" within the day-to-day actions of the institution. Looking forward, USP will want to systematically mature its research activities and infrastructure to enhance delivery of its mission and distinguish itself among the increasing number of higher education institutions in the region.

Recommendation: Invest in research, scholarship, and innovation enterprises to address regional and global problems, generate extramural and philanthropic funding, leverage indigenous knowledge, and advance strategic partnerships that support faculty, doctoral, and student research and inquiry to further the mission of the University of the South Pacific (CFR 1.1).

There is a formal commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within the context of the South Pacific and the nations USP serves. This commitment is reflected in the PASIFIKA values framework of the USP Student Charter, which states: "We are a unique family that celebrates our diversity and acknowledge that our strength lies in the unity of our communities; We value our people and pledge to advocate and support a culture of inclusiveness, equity and equality." (p. 30) (CFR 1.2). USP's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy also states "...at USP, diversity represents the nation where a person is from, the culture, history and traditions that they bring from their nations as well as gender, disability and vulnerable groups. It is within this understanding of diversity that USP maintains policies and databases that document the opportunities for citizens of each of the twelve island nations that are served by the university to work in and study at the university."

There are well developed aspects of policy that focus on gender and disability; however, there are segments of the institution, most notably senior management, that are predominantly male (89%); and an included chart shows completion rates for students with disabilities in 2022 (the most recent year reported) of less than 20%.

In the materials provided to the team, and in conversations on campuses, there was mention of programs and initiatives to advance gender equality and professional growth of women academics, and of the university's commitment to non-traditional learners and students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds. These commitments are echoed in the University Triennial Investment Plan 2025-2027 where diversity and inclusion are identified as a strategic imperative and include a focus on advancing regional diversity and gender equity for all staffing and leadership positions.

Integrity and Transparency

USP asserts a commitment to the values of integrity and transparency and lists extensive communication systems to keep constituents well informed in critical areas (CFR 1.3). While these assertions resonate with conversations on the campuses that the team visited, many campuses were not visited - some far away and in some instances small. The question raised was whether policies, procedures, values, and commitments permeate the entire university fully and consistently. There was no evidence to the contrary, but a notation of the limit of the team's review seems appropriate.

Similarly, affirmation of the universality's commitment to academic freedom would be useful across such a wide and disparate geography, especially against the backdrop of the recent coup and the exiling (subsequently terminated) of the VC&P (CFR 1.6). With a new communications unit installed, USP has been disseminating information about programs and events both internally across campuses as well as to external stakeholders through several portals including the USP website, social media platforms, e.g., Facebook, and a new brand campaign "Our People, Our Stories" that "uses personal narratives and community connections to demonstrate the transformative impact" (p. 22)(CFR 1.7). It is notable that the academic freedom policy is in general policies, not separately with academic policies. We offer these observations in the spirit of full reporting - no evidence of a lack of a full commitment to academic freedom was observed.

Standard 2 - Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success

Degree Programs

USP has six schools and 307 programs of study, of which 69 are bachelor's, 49 are master's, and 31 are doctoral. The remaining programs include certificates, diplomas, Foundation and Preliminary programs that reflect the diverse and wide range of educational needs of its learners in the region. The self-study discussed the realignment of schools in 2021 to its present state of six, and the creation of new research centers and 39 new programs in subsequent years. USP has a process for academic approval of courses and programs. Faculty are responsible for the curriculum of degree programs and engage in a process to continually shape and improve the curriculum (CFR 2.6). There is a purposeful and deliberate approach to developing and sustaining relevant academic

programs, guided by clear program and course revisions processes initiated at the school level and reviewed by committees, including the Academic Programmes Committee, which is a Senate subcommittee (CFR 2.4).

A review of several programs of study show that they are appropriate in content, with educational objectives and standards of performance clearly defined. The 2024 Handbook listed program descriptions, detailed entry requirements, and graduation requirements (CFR 2.1, 2.2).

Learning Outcomes

The USP self-study cited many examples of ways in which the university helps students achieve educational objectives (CFR 2.3). For example, there is a well-articulated Learning and Teaching Excellence Framework focused on delivering quality education, fostering student success, and integrating overarching goals and values, with comprehensive structures in place for curriculum oversight and development that is grounded in faculty ownership of the curriculum.

A review of several course syllabi showed that each listed the Graduate Attributes, program outcomes, and course outcomes. The assignments and course activities were aligned with the attributes and outcomes. According to the self-study, assessment of learning outcomes occurs in the form of capstone courses, practicum or internships, but this varies by program. USP will need to continue its work in supporting consistent assessment of learning outcomes across all programs (CFR 2.3).

Among the syllabi reviewed, including several in the Social Work program, there were examples in which the 100, 200 and 300-level courses reflected increasing complexity and expectations for mastery of learning for the students. The team met faculty who discussed ways in which they assessed student performance on a continuum, indicating that if students struggled with material in a 300-level course the faculty would revisit material at the 100 and 200 level to try to ascertain where the learning gap may have occurred. This was an example of effective use of evidence to improve course quality and learning, but there was little indication of how programs were evaluating program objectives overall. Discussions of Graduate Attributes indicated that there are currently no efforts to assess them, but academic leadership at USP recognizes this is needed (CFR 2.7, 2.9).

Program Review

In a meeting with the Planning and Quality Office, staff reported that USP has completed two cycles of academic program review (APR) since 2009, though the self-study indicated that not all scheduled programs may have been reviewed within the scheduled timeframe. The self-study also noted that “closing the loop” may be challenging based on the current governance process. The team also learned in meetings with faculty that accuracy of data provided for the review process may need to be improved, and recommendations from external reviewers often included changes that required institutional action, such as changes to policies, personnel or resources that are beyond the ability of discipline leaders or heads of schools to affect. Lastly, the Academic Program Review Policy noted a 7-year review cycle, but discussion onsite also referenced a 10-year review schedule. Discipline leads who completed academic programs reviewed reported that the process was useful and led to relevant recommendations and changes (CFR 2.4).

Between APR cycles, program changes are also occurring through the Program Prioritization process, which includes developing confidence around course enrollment data and working with schools to make sure courses meet enrollment requirements. The review process may lead to the decision to eliminate courses, and discipline and school leads work to ensure these decisions do not negatively impact student program completion. Resources from terminated courses are used to update and modernize the program. Program Prioritization is an ongoing process that appears to move more nimbly than scheduled APR cycles. It was not clear to the team how prioritization works in tandem with APR.

Faculty

Faculty at USP are responsible for developing and implementing the curriculum in all academic programs. Faculty peer review for proposals of new curriculum occurs in each academic unit (CFR 2.5, 2.6). In addition, faculty develop course syllabi, select readings, and plan instructional activities. Subject matter expertise is clearly defined through the hiring and promotion processes (CFR 2.5).

The self-study also noted several key quality assurance processes at the university, including course syllabi and assessments; external accreditation and reviews; program learning outcomes; curriculum mapping; and faculty

qualifications and experience (CFR 2.7). For example, academic positions classification standards clearly define faculty ranks and qualifications, ensuring updated and relevant content knowledge (CFR 2.5).

While visiting the Laucala campus (Suva, Fiji), the team verified that the heads of each school at USP regularly engage stakeholders such as government ministries in member nations, professional organizations such as teaching associations, and industry experts and employers to assess curricular relevance and effectiveness, and to assess workforce needs. Many programs, such as the MBA program at Laucala, have advisory committees comprised of graduates and local corporate leaders.

The institution has clear expectations for faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity that are commensurate with the mission and degree portfolio (CFR 2.8). The Academic Staff Workload policy, which was last approved by the Senate in 2018, outlines the faculty teaching and research work profiles. There are clear expectations for the amount of work and time that faculty devote to teaching, research and service. For example, “Normal Academic Staff” would have a 60:30:10 profile, consisting of teaching, research and professional contributions, respectively. There are other work profiles and classifications for faculty who are non-research, such as Teaching Intensive instructors, and others who are Teaching Only. Faculty who are highly research active are classified as Research Intensive (CFR 2.8).

Professional development is offered by the CRDU, the CFL, and through university support for academic conference attendance. Professional development often takes the form of lectures offered by international professionals, including faculty from the University of Adelaide in Australia, which has a partnership with USP (CFR 2.5). Though resources such as the CFL provide workshops related to effective hybrid or online teaching, some students the team met at Laucala and regional campuses reported challenges with their online courses, noting that while the faculty were responsive and helpful, lectures in online courses lacked engagement as students were synchronously watching in-person lectures or were asynchronously reviewing recordings of such lectures. As described elsewhere in this report, it was well understood by faculty and academic leadership that students learning at distance passed courses at lower rates than those taking the course in-person. As USP seeks to increase online or

hybrid course offerings, intentional instructional design and faculty well-trained in advanced digital instructional approaches will be necessary to ensure that all students achieve course and program outcomes equitably (CFR 2.5).

Recommendation: Ensure that students in face-to-face and distance education versions of programs, including hybrid programs, have intentionally designed educational experiences that employ advanced digital tools and demonstrate equivalent learning, retention, and degree completion results (CFR 2.5).

Student Learning and Performance, and Student Outcomes Analysis

The self-study included data related to retention and degree completion; however, the data shared were unclear due to lack of clear labeling and definitions and left the team with more questions than answers. For example, it was not clear if, in the 2021 graduation data, 13% referred to the cohort entering in 2021 or if that was the year a prior cohort had graduated. It was also unclear if graduation data reflected both undergraduate and graduate programs or if Pacific TAFE enrollments were included. Similarly, it was not clear how retention was defined (CFR 2.9). Data describing student success by location were also provided. However, retention was reported as a percentage and degree completion as a number, so it was not possible to determine whether students are successfully completing programs of study (CFR 2.10). Nevertheless, these data pointed to significant differences in student success by study modality, nationality, and location that are worthy of discussion, but the self-study offered little insight as to why this might be happening and no solutions or responses to these data were offered (CFR 4.2).

The self-study noted that 40% of undergraduate programs include a work integrated learning component that is organized within each school. For students taking distance courses, the work integrated learning would take place near their place of residence, unless they need to access research labs or other opportunities available only at the Laucala campus, in which case those students may need to complete those learning components on Fiji.

USP assesses postgraduate outcomes through the Graduate Destinations Surveys. Data from cohorts in 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 were shared onsite. With response rates of 49% to 66%, the survey revealed that graduates expressed strong satisfaction with the quality of their education program; each year 97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I was satisfied with the quality of the programme.” Overall

employment for each reporting year was 63% and 66% during the COVID years of 2020 and 2021, increasing to 77% and 79% for 2022 and 2023 (CFR 2.11).

Student Support

Discussion of the role of co-curricular and student services was minimal in the self-study. At the Laucala campus, the team met with a wide range of personnel in student services. Academic support services are available to students in various forms, from teaching assistants to Student Learning Support (SLS), the Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) program, and other forms of coaching and tutoring. Student services, such as health services, counseling, career advising, campus life, disability services, sports and recreation, and first year experience, are available to USP students in person or online based on location (CFR 2.13). While some of these programs may be part of the section program review process, and others are reviewed via a few questions on the Total Experience Survey, most staff reported that there is little or no access to student data, and currently no assessment system that would allow these services to measure impact on student success aside from occasional feedback surveys. These offices and services do not have systematically collected data that would help them identify areas for improvement or otherwise make informed decisions. While student privacy is important, deidentified, aggregated data may help academic support services improve their offerings, and allow other offices such as disability services, campus life, or career services to understand how to better serve students' needs. Student services staff and students at some of the regional campuses visited by team members reported that while some services offered online are effective, some services are better offered in person, such as counseling, due to language and cultural differences.

Recommendation: Develop a comprehensive strategy for student and academic support services that considers local needs of regional campuses, including relevant data sharing and thoughtful assessment of outcomes and impact (CFR 2.14).

Standard 3: Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures

Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

USP demonstrated the qualifications and sufficiency of its faculty, staff, and senior administrators using several types of evidence, including an internal funding model (IFM) for allocating financial resources across schools; a

faculty workload policy for equitable workload assignments; a staff classification policy; a recruitment and appointment policy and procedure; and periodic internal and external academic program reviews (CFR 3.1.). All these approaches are governed by several council and management appointed committees. The IFM uses a variety of data to determine necessary instructional resources (from teaching assistants to professorial positions) for each school including course enrollments, workloads, levels and types of courses taught, staff support ratios, and non-salary expenses ratios. The model also considers special situations such as new courses and protected courses including those linked to a strategic plan objective. As reported in the university's self-study and in its 2024 annual plan, there were 476 faculty and 1,133 staff budgeted for the 2024 academic year ended December 31, 2024. This budgeted level maintained a faculty to staff ratio of 1:2.4 and a student to faculty ratio of 1:28. The faculty to staff ratio has been very consistent since fiscal year 2018 despite enrollment declines that began in that year. Interviews with senior administrators at the Laucala campus indicated that the effectiveness of the IFM is evaluated periodically. In these interviews, the team also learned the VC&P can use discretionary funds to address strategic needs that are not addressed by the IFM.

USP provided evidence of its ongoing plans to help assure the qualifications, sufficiency, and sustainability of its workforce through initiatives outlined in the University Triennial Investment Plan 2025-2027. These initiatives, which outline measures to address the decline in student enrollment, financial constraints, and the changing expectations of student learners, include a comprehensive review of all staffing needs with an emphasis on consolidating positions; targeted recruitment and strategic placements; recruitment decisions aligned with strategic goals; faculty development and upskilling with an emphasis on digital learning and teaching skills; faculty and staff development in leadership and change management; recognition and retention efforts addressing performance-based rewards and career development opportunities for staff from member countries; diversity and inclusion efforts focused on regional representation, gender equity, and equity in access to and preparation for use of digital tools; comprehensive programs focused on market-competitive remuneration and staff wellbeing; and enhanced digital learning and adaptive capacity focused on professional development in digital delivery (CFR 3.1). Interviews with senior administrators at the Laucala campus indicated that implementation of these workforce initiatives were just

getting underway. The initial implementation is being addressed as a change management effort focused on educating various members of the university community, including staff unions, on the need and rationale for the initiatives.

USP supports all employees through comprehensive, mission-aligned, human resource policies and practices. The self-study highlighted policies and procedures to ensure recruitment, hiring, orientation practices, and workload expectations are aligned with USP's mission and priorities (CFR 3.2). These include a recruitment and appointment policy and procedure; faculty workload policy; academic position classification standards; administrative classification policy; professional position classification standards policy; quality of research policy; quality of teaching policy; equal employment opportunities policy; and disability inclusiveness policy. These policies and procedures are overseen by a staff development committee that makes recommendations for change, for example, an initiative to increase the representation of women in leadership roles. Finally, the self-study described how USP introduced an online recruitment portal in November 2022 to streamline the hiring process and to provide comprehensive information about career opportunities as well as inform candidates about the university's mission and priorities. The portal uses Google Analytics and initial results from 2023 were promising regarding the number of views, active users, and applicants per position.

Faculty and staff retention data provided in the self-study indicated that the median length of service declined from seven to six years between 2021 and 2022 for both faculty and staff whereas, for staff only, the average length of service increased slightly over this same interval from 8.9 to 9.4 years. USP did not draw any conclusions about these data, but they may suggest that longer term employees are retained longer than newer employees. The team also notes that a staff climate/engagement survey was last administered in 2017. Interviews with senior administrators indicated that a staff climate/engagement survey will be administered during 2025. The team encourages USP to pursue this effort, and to continue to offer this survey on a regular cadence. This will be especially important given the significant institutional changes USP has outlined in the University Triennial Investment Plan 2025-2027.

Evidence that USP provides professional development opportunities and evaluation of faculty and staff included a professional development leave process embedded in a leave policy, a fee concessions (tuition remission) policy, a staff review policy, and a three-tier (individual academic and staff, supervisors, and review committees)

review and promotion process (CFR 3.3). Data from 2022 indicated that two staff members were granted training leave for PhD studies, over 35% of staff were participating in tuition remission, and that 23 of 40 candidates progressed in promotion processes. Data were not provided on the percentage of staff that progress in promotion processes or what USP makes of those data. Likewise, no information was provided on the timeliness of those processes. Both senior administrators and staff reported that annual evaluation processes were occurring. However, some staff indicated that some reviews essential to reappointment were delayed. Interviews also affirmed that professional development opportunities were available to staff and are being utilized by them, although staff felt that more professional development opportunities should be made available.

Interviews with faculty and staff on the Laucala campus, and at the three regional campuses visited by the team, indicated that vacant faculty and staff positions throughout the university remain a persistent problem and are negatively impacting workloads and morale. The interviews also indicated that the number of vacant staff positions makes it difficult for staff to take advantage of available professional development opportunities due to workload constraints.

The team acknowledges that the university is beginning to undergo a workforce transformation process as outlined in the University Triennial Investment Plan 2025-2027 and that this process is a factor in the number of vacant staff positions throughout the university. The workforce transformation process represents an ambitious phased change management effort with communication and educational components that are being directed by the SMT. The team also acknowledges that the workforce transformation process entails challenges in maintaining sufficient staffing during the implementation phase. As USP works through this process, it will be important that the SMT ensure that staffing is sufficient to ensure institutional objectives can continue to be met during the transformation process.

Financial, Physical, Technology, and Information Resources

USP's self-study and supporting documents provided several sources of evidence that its budget and resource allocation planning and processes effectively support its institutional objectives (CFR 3.4). The university develops rolling three-year financial plans that support three-year strategic planning periods and that, in turn, are

incorporated into a triennial submission (a high-level plan outlining university priorities and funding plans) for approval by the Council. These plans in turn provide the basis for annual plans and budgets that are adopted by the Council before the start of each fiscal year. Development of these plans is governed by a financial planning, monitoring, and control policy and is overseen by nine separate university committees that help ensure input and oversight from various stakeholders. A review of USP's budget planning process, which is focused on school level plans, and interviews with various members of the university's community, indicate that resource planning, development, and allocation processes are linked with institutional strategic objectives, are data informed, and result in budgetary projections that appear realistic (CFR 3.4).

Evidence that USP has adequate financial resources now and for the future was demonstrated by a history of financial stability with clean audits, growing net assets, and operating surpluses for each of the six fiscal years examined by the team ending December 31, 2024 (CFR 3.5). During the fiscal years examined, net assets, which include reserves, grew by \$130.3 million⁵ or 80.7% from \$161.5 million at the beginning of fiscal year 2019 to \$291.8 million at the end of fiscal year 2024. Preliminary financial reports indicate that this trend in net assets growth continued into 2025 with stabilization in enrollment occurring in 2024. Notably, this growth in net assets occurred despite enrollment declines and reduced tuition and fee income from 45.2% of total revenues in fiscal year 2019 to 33.3% of total revenues in 2024 as well as disruptions in financial support from one member country. This country, Fiji, is now making its annual government support payments and is gradually paying down its arrears which totaled approximately \$80.0 million as of December 31, 2024. The team also notes that USP's revenue resources appear to provide adequate revenue diversification without overreliance on tuition and fee income. Revenue sources include student tuition and fees (33.3%), grants from the governments of USP's 12 member countries (28.4%), development assistance from non-member countries and organizations (23.9%), and other revenue sources including commercial activities (14.4%). Finally, the team notes that USP's current three-year financial plan for 2025-2027 projects modest enrollment growth, minimal tuition increases, small operating surplus margins, and increases in net assets while keeping the percentage of total revenues provided by tuition and fees under 35.0%.

⁵ USP financial statements are reported in Fiji dollars, which are the equivalent of approximately .45 U.S. dollars

The team's review of university reports, meeting minutes, and interviews with the independent auditors, senior administrators, and council members indicate a commitment to financial stability, financial oversight, risk management, and sustainability (CFR 3.4, 3.5). This was also evidenced by actual financial results, oversight processes including cost management, internal audits, strategic planning, and the use of financial ratios and other key performance indicators. These same sources, and especially the University Triennial Investment Plan 2025-2027, also indicate an awareness of the risks and challenges facing the university such as enrollment declines from 2018 to 2023; changes in student demographics and student expectations; changes to the mix of teaching and learning modalities; fixed or declining levels of ongoing government support; the gradual payback of government support in arrears from one member country; the rise of national universities in five member countries; and changes in migration patterns driven by employment incentives in non-member countries. Finally, these same sources described risk mitigation strategies that are underway including the development of new student markets in non-member countries, student retention strategies, expenditure reductions, efficiency strategies, workforce consolidation, and curricular transformation, as well as strategies to address risks from natural disasters and the aging infrastructure on some USP campuses.

The team did, however, identify what it considers to be a significant risk factor that should be addressed with more urgency. A consistent concern that was raised by students at several campuses, and often echoed by faculty and staff, was the affordability of tuition and fees at USP as well as the other related costs of education including housing, the purchase/lease of a personal computer, internet connectivity, and even access to electrical power. Concerns about affordability were also reflected in increasing levels of student receivables (i.e. debt), a decreasing number of students receiving government support, the number of students with long degree completion timelines, and by low program completion rates by students on some campuses.

Recommendation: Address student affordability, especially for those students who are not fully sponsored, in order to improve access to university programs, reduce student debt, improve recruitment and retention, and promote student success (CFR 3.4).

Multiple lines of evidence confirm that USP provides physical resources sufficient to meet the needs of faculty, staff, administrators, and students (CFR 3.6). These include longitudinal student satisfaction survey data; plans, policies, procedures, and staffing structures focused on space management, disaster preparedness, and disaster recovery; and the short and long-term maintenance plans for facilities that are reviewed annually and remain focused on a “net zero” goal for facilities by 2035. Deferred maintenance was raised as a concern in conversations with faculty, staff, administrators, and students on the Laucala and regional campuses and on the Laucala campus, students recommended attention to janitorial services for restrooms and continuity in water access. Looking forward, and using funds from financial reserves and other sources, the University Triennial Investment Plan 2025-2027 includes a commitment to addressing deferred maintenance across USP’s campuses as well as reenvisioning several regional campuses as regional hubs with amenities to attract and retain students.

Evidence that USP provides technology resources sufficient to meet the needs of faculty, staff, administrators, and students included longitudinal student satisfaction survey data, service level agreements for campuses, and an ICT committee for regional campuses. Evidence also included a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation on staff organization and the multi-faceted infrastructure that provides secure technology services and applications university-wide as well as on the various ways in which technology infrastructure, facilities, and support are delivered on each campus and remotely from the Laucala campus. Further evidence was provided in the University Triennial Investment Plan 2025-2027 which provided linkages to strategic and funding initiatives for the maintenance and improvement of technology resources including the support of the expanding number of distance and hybrid courses (CFR 3.6). In some interviews, it was reported that the technology resources provided by USP were satisfactory but that Wi-Fi internet access on campuses was sometimes unreliable, especially during heavy usage times in academic terms.

Evidence that USP provides library services and resources sufficient to meet the needs of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on a university-wide basis and on each campus included a review of the structure of library services provided virtually and physically at the main library on the Laucala campus, at two regional campus libraries (Samoa and Emalus), and at 18 other locations across USP member countries. Evidence was also provided

by a review of the educational services, including orientation and research assistance, and resources provided via the library website including access to the main library with its extensive general and specialized physical collections of over 1.0 million volumes, 70,000 full-text journals, more than 200,000 e-books, databases, and open access materials. Senior library staff at the main library described their use of the Library Advisory Committee of the Senate to improve library resources and services. In addition, the team heard and saw evidence at the Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Lautoka campuses of the ability of the library to modify space usage to meet changing student needs. Lastly, a review of library services surveys and library user satisfaction surveys confirmed stakeholder satisfaction with library services (CFR 3.6).

The team notes that managing USP's physical and technological resources is a daunting task. USP facilities are spread over 14 campuses in 12 member countries, which in turn are distributed across thousands of miles of ocean. These include USP Cook Islands, Rarotonga, Cook Islands; USP Emalus Campus, Port Vila, Vanuatu; USP Kiribati Campus, Bairiki, Kiribati; USP Labasa Campus, Labasa, Fiji; USP Laucala Campus, Suva, Fiji; USP Lautoka Campus, Lautoka, Fiji; USP Marshall Islands Campus, Majuro, Marshall Islands; USP Nauru Campus, Republic of Nauru; USP Niue Campus, Alofi, Niue; USP Samoa Campus, Apia, Samoa; USP Solomon Islands Campus, Honiara, Solomon Islands; USP Tokelau Campus, Atafu, Tokelau; USP Tonga Campus, Nuku'alofa, Tonga; and USP Tuvalu Campus, Funafuti, Tuvalu.

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

USP demonstrated the autonomy and independence of its governing board primarily through its royal charter and statutes that date back to 1970 and followed the founding of the university in 1968 (CFR 3.7). The royal charter indicates that the university is to be governed by a council that is comprised of representatives from its 12 member countries, Australia and New Zealand, and USP senate, staff, and students; co-opted members chosen for their special expertise and/or associations; and the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum. Other council members include the chancellor (ceremonial head of the university), pro-chancellor, vice-chancellor and president (executive head of the university), and deputy pro-chancellor. Given the responsibilities of these council members to

their home countries, it was not surprising to hear in interviews that the Council and its committees have frequently experienced difficulties in achieving quorum for meetings.

The members of the Council have a range of backgrounds, knowledge, and skills to effectively fulfill their responsibilities (CFR 3.8). Interviews and a review of council minutes provide further evidence of an independent board as well as adherence to the statutes-mandated appointment and evaluation of the vice-chancellor and president. These same sources provided evidence of council self-evaluation and a council committee that is focused on mission, integrity, and oversight (CFR 3.7). The statutes of the university function like bylaws and detail the powers, duties, and functions of the Council and its committees, which include an executive committee. The statutes also have a provision for disclosure of council members' conflicts of interest as well as a provision for the council to assess itself, its leadership including committee chairs, and the vice chancellor and president, who the council appoints. Finally, the statutes detail the powers, duties, and functions of the vice chancellor and president as well as the composition, role, and powers of the Senate as the academic authority of the university.

The self-study presented recent changes in four of the five senior leaders at USP including the vice-chancellor and president (2019), deputy vice-chancellor and vice president for education (2020), chief operating officer (2022), and acting deputy vice-chancellor and vice president for research and innovation (2023). Evidence shared in interviews, documents, and reports reveals that USP has sufficient and qualified leadership at all levels, that is characterized by integrity, appropriate responsibility, high performance, and accountability (CFR 3.9).

USP also provided evidence of regular and systematic uses of institutional data to inform decision making, for example, in the Planning and Quality Office and the data flow process using the Banner enterprise resource planning system that includes analysis, numerous outputs, user access, and user feedback. Evidence also included four major institutional surveys (total experience, course experience, graduate destination, and employer satisfaction surveys) and reports on key performance indicators, strategic plan progress, and enrollment trends. Finally, evidence included the university's triennial investment planning processes, its annual budget planning processes, and the use of key performance indicators to measure institutional performance by the council and senior management team (CFR 3.10). Review of institutional documents and interviews verified that data is

transparent and shared but has not been consistently shared at all levels of the institution due to software licensing limitations. Interviews also indicated that there are plans to improve data sharing at all levels of the university (CFR 3.10). It is important to note, however, that in advancing this work USP has also reduced access to other constituents, e.g., regional faculty and staff, due to licensing issues and access (see recommendation in standard 4).

Evidence that USP organizational structures and decision-making processes are clearly defined, consistent, and transparent included organizational charts and structures on its public website as well as a 2021 report (Towards a Stronger USP) that was commissioned by the Council and included recommendations for enhancing the processes governing human resources, finance, governance, and management (CFR 3.11). The team did note that organization charts at the school and department levels were not readily available or centralized.

In sum, it is clear that USP utilizes data to support effective decision making and risk management, while placing priority on sustaining institutional resilience and educational effectiveness. This is reflected in an internal audit process, policies, procedures, and committee structures focused on institutional risk management, tolerance, and communication as well as the extensive rolling three year financial and strategic planning processes at the university level that identify risks and include risk mitigation measures (CFR 3.11).

Standard 4 - Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes

Quality assurance and improvement at USP is collective and operates at the programmatic and discipline level, and through partnerships such as regional meetings of Pacific Islands (PacREF) to discuss strategic plans and progress (CFR 4.8); regular staff and faculty forums to support continued skill building to assess quality and relevance to improve student outcomes; and program advisory committees that meet annually to review courses and programs to ensure that they are job market-aligned. Several courses of study are also programmatically accredited (CFR 4.1, 4.6).

The self-study discussed the use of several quality assurance frameworks, including the Pacific, Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand. Staff reported that compliance with the higher education requirements and frameworks for the

five member nations that currently have them is challenging and may not be sustainable. Maintaining compliance with each framework is organized at the management level, through a staff person in the Planning and Quality Office, who works directly with relevant countries, and leadership of two staff in CRDU who work closely with school heads to ensure that each course and program is in compliance with quality assurance frameworks, accreditors, and the respective higher education policies from member nations. It was clear from the discussions on site that the USP faculty and staff work diligently to ensure compliance on quality assurance measures at all levels, from course syllabi to graduate outcomes.

USP has a well-defined quality policy that focuses on principles, objectives, scope, as well as quality assurance processes, which include commitment to continuous improvement, clear roles and responsibilities, alignment with external standards, and a student-centered approach (CFR 4.1, 4.5).

USP deploys several survey instruments to provide ongoing data on student satisfaction and outcomes, such as the Total Experience Survey, which supports decision making. KPIs are generated and used to monitor progress and inform decision making. For example, the self-study noted that Institutional Research is helping to create data dashboards to allow various offices to see progress (CFR 4.4, 4.8), though the team heard from some staff that while they had access to data previously, they no longer do and have been unable to successfully request information through Student Administrative Services (SAS) or other offices.

As discussed in Standard 2, the team reviewed data related to retention and degree completion in the self-study but were unable to understand the information due to lack of definitions and clear labeling (CFR 4.2). Data definitions provided after the off-site review in October 2024 did not resolve the team's questions and a detailed request for clearer graduation and retention data made during the visit to Laucala was not fulfilled. Discussions with teaching staff, the chief operating officer and school leads indicated that data are collected and used to inform decisions at many levels. However, the team also learned that the way some data are entered and organized makes it difficult for data analysts to retrieve accurate data. For example, there was one report of the challenges in retrieving accurate student enrollment data during an academic program review process as typographical errors in entering student data resulted in inaccurate data. These and other examples indicate that more work is needed to

strengthen institutional research capabilities. USP needs data policies, as well as architecture and systems to allow for accurate and easy entry; and data reliability will require trained personnel to be able to identify issues and clean data; and lastly, effective institutional research requires data leadership to support the development of systematic assessment instruments, beyond satisfaction surveys or counting participation, to improve the university's ability to assess impact, change or outcomes in both academic and non-academic programs (CFR 4.1, 4.2).

Recommendation: Develop institutional research capacity, including data integrity, data accessibility, and the data literacy of all staff, to enable data-informed planning and decision making across the institution (CFR 4.4).

Institutional Improvement

There is a concerted effort and genuine commitment to institutional improvement at USP. For example, the team learned about changes to academic programs resulting from engagement with industry advisory councils; similarly, external evaluations during the academic program review process led to changes in courses. Seeing the need to improve coordination of quality assurance frameworks and national higher education frameworks, USP created the CRDU to create efficiencies and streamline the work. The CRDU supports school-level compliance, organizes professional development for faculty, and helps schools “close the loop” on action plans stemming from academic program review. CRDU also centralizes the collection of data, course outlines, and other materials needed for quality assurance and accreditation (CFR 4.5).

Along the theme of continued institutional improvement, our interviews of council members and senior executives revealed efforts for the Council to seek further professional development through new member induction sessions, with recorded videos they can watch outside of council meetings, and staggered terms to improve continuity of knowledge and processes (CFR 4.7). In addition, faculty who are engaged in the evaluation of teaching and learning through course evaluations, post graduate surveys and other collected data shared how they are beginning to use this to improve the student learning experience. Discipline leads carefully review all course content and pedagogical approaches each term (CFR 4.6).

Subsection C: Reflections - Synthesis of Insights as a Result of the Reaffirmation Process

USP's work to critically review their efforts to pursue excellence as they achieve their mission to serve students and their communities, after several years marked by political challenges and upheavals, financial strain and trials, impact of natural disasters, and a global pandemic warrants a "Vinaka Vakalevu" (Good Job!). Our assessments (presented throughout this report) describe strategic priorities that have emerged from this perfect storm. Using both the Commission recommendations and their mission, the faculty and staff conducted an extensive audit of their organizing and governing structures and infrastructures, policies and processes, and the needs of a complex and diverse student body across 12 island nations to reflect, synthesize, and report on their endeavors in light of the four WSCUC standards. The report, appendix materials, materials requested following the OSR and during the AV, including the University Triennial Investment Plan 2025-27 and Strategic Action Plan, establish a clear path forward to actualize "consolidation, innovation, transformation, and sustainability."

As reported, USP successfully opened their newest regional campus in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The growth in enrollment of students earning both bachelors and graduate degrees as well as the increasing numbers of students participating in Pacific TAFE speak to the opportunity USP offers students striving to meet their goals to support their families and grow strong communities. USP has employed a COO who is working across many institutional silos to engage collaborative frameworks and actions that will affect decision making in support of growing enrollment, maximizing the value of academic programs throughout the newly defined six colleges, and graduating critically engaged scholars and leaders who are contributors to their island communities. In fact, the newly launched USP Centre for Sustainable Futures offers an opportunity for USP to pilot the work of consolidation and focus to strengthen and scale-up key efforts, i.e., "climate finance and resilience knowledge and collaboration."

USP continues to meet the demand for improved facilities and state-of-the art IT and digital tools support. This has become an increasingly important focus of USP as they offer a large percentage of their coursework, student services, institutional meetings, and much more online. The leadership in both ITS and facilities have developed a professional culture that is reflected in their services at the Laucala campus and across the three campuses visited by team members (Solomon Islands, Samoa, and Lautoka, Fiji). There is still more work to be done

with the smaller island countries as well as deferred maintenance and renovations at all the campuses. Having short-range to mid- and long-range plans would be helpful. Overall, the campuses' services, which require attention to multiple local as well as regional and national elements, are positioned to meet current and future challenges.

During this time of "change and transformation" there is much to be done. The report has already mentioned challenges and opportunities across each of the standards. Given the complexities of serving 12 different island nations, USP must continue its efforts to develop vital and vibrant curriculum that engages students in exploring 21st Century careers while providing state-of-the-art IT and communications tools, and offering every student caring academic guidance to maximize their ability to persist and graduate – all of this while capturing robust data across six schools, multiple institutes, and 14 regional campuses/centers to address the numerous metrics and questions that will help the institution understand student success, graduate student impact, fiscal fidelity, faculty/staff productivity, and so much more.

In addition to the commendations and recommendations in section IV of this report, the team offers a few additional thoughts based on our observations and interviews. We identify that all levels of the organization, beginning with the Council and its Executive Committee, participate in ongoing professional development programs, executive coaching, and team building. At the same time, USP would benefit from establishing an executive leadership development programme to "grow the next generation of USP leaders." We note that the growth oriented fiscal/budget model, mentioned in the triennial investment plan, together with "intelligent use of resources" is building a sturdy business model that factors in diverse streams of revenues including country funding, student tuition and fees, grants and contracts, and philanthropic giving. The sustainable and scaleable student enrollment and student services framework is laudable. Finally, staffing matters! We observed that there are programs that are growing and require more faculty and staff and there are programs with too many faculty and staff and dwindling students and relevance – so right-sizing is essential – and that innovative teaching and research skills are needed, thus faculty and staff must be provided the professional development they need.

In the end, we see that USP has worked hard and continues to develop their sail-plan to ensure that at each landfall they will meet their purpose and vision of “resilience, student-centred development, and sustainable growth across the Pacific.” (A little navigational metaphor used here.)

Subsection D: Compliance with 2023 WSCUC Standards

Standard 1 - Defining Institutional Mission and Acting with Integrity

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with Standard 1.

The school has articulated its mission clearly and thoroughly in ways that reflect its unconventional setting and organizational structure and its unique opportunity to have an important positive impact on the region and its people (CFR 1.1). Advancing diversity, equity and inclusion are central to its objectives though work remains in certain areas such as reducing the significant under representation of women in senior administrative positions (CFR 1.2).

The CFRs dealing with integrity and transparency have received serious attention through the school's policies and commitments (CFR 1.3 and 1.4). Nothing to the contrary was revealed in the team's discussions and interviews though it should be noted that because of the far-flung nature of the campuses many campuses were not observed firsthand.

Though nothing in the team's inquiry raised question regarding its commitment to academic policy required by the Standards, the academic policies appear along with general university policies rather than separately articulately to emphasize their importance for accreditation review (CFR 1.5).

Standard 2 - Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success

Standard 2. The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with Standard 2.

USP achieves its educational and student success objectives through teaching and learning, and through support for student learning (CFR 2.9 and 2.10). The institution demonstrates that core functions are performed effectively by evaluating valid and reliable evidence of learning (CFR 2.9).

USP clearly identifies and effectively implements Graduate and Postgraduate Outcomes (CFR 2.1). These outcomes and expectations are reflected in and supported by academic programs, policies, and curricula (CFR 2.3). The university supports the success of students through academic advising, student support programs and services, and information and technology resources (CFR 2.12 and 2.13).

The institution conducts periodic reviews of its degree programs, though delays in the review process may require acceleration of the schedule or a change in approach for the process to be comprehensive and effective (CFR 2.4).

USP has faculty with the capacity and scale to design and deliver the curriculum and to evaluate, improve, and promote student learning and success (CFR 2.5). Clear standards for faculty rank and qualifications support hiring to meet curricular needs. The faculty exercise academic leadership and act consistently to ensure that the quality of academic programs and the institution's educational purposes are sustained (CFR 2.6). Some survey data indicate faculty development may be needed to improve online course instruction.

The institution monitors and analyzes the outcomes of its students' following graduation and uses the results for improvement through Graduate Destination Surveys and employer and stakeholder advisory committees (CFR 2.11).

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has not provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with CFR 2.14. See the team's recommendation on this topic. Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

Standard 3 – Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with Standard 3.

Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

USP employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in scale, professional qualifications, and background to achieve the institution's educational and student success objectives, to propose and oversee policy, and to ensure the integrity of its academic, student support, and co-curricular programs and services and administrative processes.

As USP transforms its workforce, it will be important for the SMT to ensure continued sufficiency of its staffing resources (CFR 3.1).

The university's recruitment, hiring, and orientation practices and workload expectations are aligned with institutional mission and priorities (CFR 3.2). Professional development opportunities are available to faculty and staff (CFR 3.3). USP would benefit from expanding those opportunities to support the transformation of its workforce and instructional models as well as student success.

Fiscal, Physical, Technology, and Information Services

The university has highly developed resource allocation processes that are data informed, realistic, and integrated with operational and strategic planning processes that support its institutional goals and programs (CFR 3.4). The affordability of tuition and fees as well as the other related costs of education are risk factors USP will want to address.

USP has demonstrated long-term financial resource stability and growth as evidenced by its unmodified independent financial audits, lack of deficits, revenue diversification, and growth in net assets despite enrollment declines, disruptions in member government support, and the negative impacts of the Covid pandemic (CFR 3.5).

The institution provides physical, technology, information, and other resources sufficient in scope, quality, currency, and kind to support the work of its faculty, staff, administrators, and students. USP continues to invest in addressing deferred maintenance and evolving technological and digital infrastructure to support the needs of faculty, staff, administrators, and students that are distributed out over the vast expanse of the South Pacific (CFR 3.6).

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

The independent structure of the university and its governing council, the functioning and oversight of the council and its committees, and the qualification of council members, allow USP to provide educational services to its members nations across an incredibly wide swath of the South Pacific, although the council and its committees have sometimes experienced quorum issues at their scheduled meetings (CFR 3.7 and CFR3.8). The oversight

provided by the council complements a very well-defined organizational structure led by the vice chancellor and president with a very competent senior leadership team (CFR 3.9).

The university's various planning processes, with few exceptions, are clearly defined, systematic, data informed, results oriented, and transparent (CFR 3.10). That said, some levels of the institution have inconsistent data access. The university is also becoming increasingly student-centric and focused on transformative changes to meet the evolving expectations of its students and member countries while at the same time maintaining a focus on a sustainable future (CFR 3.11).

Standard 4 - Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with Standard 4.

USP has a well-defined quality policy and quality assurance processes and is committed to student learning and success and uses the results to improve institutional operations (CFR 4.1).

KPIs are generated and used to monitor progress and inform decision making and the report highlighted examples of changes to academic programs arising from quality assurance processes (CFR 4.5).

USP regularly engages its stakeholders in reflection and planning processes based on the examination of evidence, in the form of faculty forums, by leadership from the school leadership, through engaging with employers, and monitoring employment of graduates. Through these processes it assesses the institution's strategic position, articulates priorities, examines the alignment of its purposes, core functions, and resources, and defines the future direction of the institution (CFR 4.8).

The institution generally demonstrates improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation, though student graduation and retention data shared with the team shows weaknesses in data systems; access to data and effective assessment are not available to some non-academic program areas that could benefit from systematic data collection (CFR 4.1). It is not clear that the institution has institutional research capacity, scope, and coordination needed to effectively produce essential student success data, such as clearly defined retention and graduation outcomes, or student success by location, program or learning modality. The team's finding, which is

subject to Commission review, is that the institution has not provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with CFR 4.4. See the team’s recommendation on this topic.

Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

Section IV – Commendations and Recommendations

USP is a unique and internationally important institution of higher education. Through a diverse array of programs, including skills-based credentials, college preparatory coursework, and undergraduate and graduate degrees and credentials, and its research institutes, USP is delivering on its mission to provide education and research that improves the lives of the individuals and communities of the 12 member nations it serves. Students seek an education at USP because of its profile and the opportunities its internally benchmarked and accredited curriculum affords. Reciprocally, USP seeks to increase the impact of its mission by working to make its programs as accessible as possible, through ongoing efforts to support the success of its students, and by pursuing research that addresses the significant challenges facing the island nations of the Pacific.

As UPS continues to transform its operations to meet the challenges of delivering higher education in the South Pacific in the 21st century, the team offers the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The team commends USP for the following:

1. A highly developed resource allocation and oversight process that links strategic and operational planning and that is evidence-based, realistic, and focused on institutional objectives.
2. A long history of effective financial management highlighted by unmodified independent audit opinions, operating surpluses, and growing net assets despite the enrollment and government support challenges faced by the university.
3. An integrated system that draws on best practices to provide library resources and educational services both physically and virtually to staff and students at all university locations across the South Pacific.

4. Creating the Curriculum Review and Development Unit (CRDU) that fosters continuous improvement, including the management of accreditations, quality assurance frameworks, and requirements from member nations.
5. Skillful management of the complexities of serving multinational interests and funding, through stakeholder engagement and thoughtful development of triennial investment and annual strategic plans, while maintaining a focus on student needs and outcomes.

Recommendations

The team recommends that the institution respond to the following issues:

1. Address student affordability, especially for those students who are not fully sponsored, to improve access to university programs, reduce student debt, improve recruitment and retention, and promote student success (CFR 3.4).
2. Invest in research, scholarship, and innovation enterprises to address regional and global problems, generate extramural and philanthropic funding, leverage indigenous knowledge, and advance strategic partnerships that support faculty, doctoral, and student research and inquiry to further the mission of the University of the South Pacific (CFR 1.1).
3. Develop a comprehensive strategy for student and academic support services that considers local needs of regional campuses, including relevant data sharing and thoughtful assessment of outcomes and impact (CFR 2.13).
4. Develop institutional research capacity, including data integrity, data accessibility, and the data literacy of all staff, to enable data-informed planning and decision making across the institution (CFR 4.4).
5. Ensure that students in face-to-face and distance education versions of programs, including hybrid programs, have intentionally designed educational experiences that employ advanced digital tools and demonstrate equivalent learning, retention, and degree completion results (CFR 2.5, CFR 4.6).

Appendices

The report includes the following appendices:

A. Federal Compliance Forms

1. 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? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, where is the policy located? See next box.
	Comments: USP Policy Library, under Academic and Student Administration policies USP Credit Point Policy
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)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: We do have an internal procedure through the programme approval and revisions process which is vetted through the discipline Board of Studies and Academic Programmes Committee
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet (clarify with Moe)	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: The USP Handbook and Calendar clearly identifies the number of units to take and the associated credit points. Also, each student has access to an online audit of the programs. The Programme Audit also provides a list of courses a student is required to take over the period of their programme and the number of courses successfully completed at the end of every semester.
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? 9
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Both
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Computer Science, General Education, Math
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Syllabi include tabular summaries that explicitly outline the various types of activities/work and associated hours of effort students are required to undertake to earn the units for the course. See USP's Credit Point Policy.
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g.,	How many syllabi were reviewed? 2
	What kinds of courses? Work experience, professional practice course
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Computer Science, Electrical Engineering

internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated) <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Syllabi include tabular summaries that explicitly outline the various types of activities/work and associated hours of effort students are required to undertake to earn the units for the course. See USP's Credit Point Policy.
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? 5
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? Undergraduate and Graduate
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Information Systems, Agriculture, Marine Management, Education
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: The number of courses or other degree requirements are standardized across USP.

Review Completed By: Laura E. Martin

Date: April 23, 2025

2. 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? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: There was no evidence that USP provides incentive compensation to its employees or that it retains third party entities to recruit students.
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: The USP 2024 Handbook and Calendar, which can be found on USP's public website, details the typical lengths of academic programs based on the number of courses required. The USP 2024 Handbook and Calendar also provides detailed cost information for each course offered by modality and by the currency of the student's member country. Requisite fees are also detailed.
	USP also provides prospective students with a net price calculator that estimates the total cost of each program based on the individual's living arrangement and residency. The net price calculator can be found on USP's public website.
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

	Comments: USP publishes an annual prospectus (most recent 2025) that provides information on potential job or graduate career paths for each program categorized by school. USP also provides career counseling and related services through a Career and Entrepreneurial Centre. Detailed information about the employment of USP graduates is also available through the Career and Entrepreneurial Centre via an annual graduate destination survey. These annual surveys are also available to all USP staff via the University's intranet.
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*§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: Peter A. Michell
Date: March 31, 2025

3. 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	<p>Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>The policy is accessible through the USP Policy Library, under Academic and Student Administration policies: Student Grievance Policy and Student Grievance Procedures</p>
Process(es)/ procedure	<p>Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If so, please describe briefly: See Student Grievance Procedures</p> <p>If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>Comments:</p>
Records	<p>Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If so, where?</p> <p>The Online grievances relating to academic approval framework are maintained in AAGO whereas the completed grievance forms are maintained by USP's Student Administrative Services (SAS).</p>

	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? ✓YES □NO
	If so, please describe briefly: Comments: SAS does the overtime tracking and monitoring of student grievances. A report on the type and status of student grievances is presented in the Teaching Quality Committee (TQC) for every semester.

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: Maenette Benham

Date: 04-2302025

4. 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
	If so, is the policy publicly available? ✓YES □ NO
	If so, where? USP Policy Library, under its Academic and Student Administration Policies See Credit Transfer Regulations and Credit Transfer Procedure
	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: See 1.2 and 1.6 of the Credit Transfer Regulations

*§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: Laura E. Martin

Date: April 23, 2025

B. Distance Education Review

Distance Education Review-Team Report Appendix

Please complete either Section A for institutions that offer distance education programs approved by WSCUC or are 100% distance education institutions OR Section B for institutions that utilize distance education in the delivery of programs that do not rise to the level of a WSCUC approved distance education program.

Institution: The University of the South Pacific

Type of Visit: Accreditation Visit

Name of reviewer/s: Laura Martin, Peter Michell

Date/s of review:

Section Completed: X_ A OR __ B

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all comprehensive visits 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.

SECTION A: Institutions with Approved Distance Education Programs

1. Programs and courses reviewed (please list)

Review team members were provided access to two courses:

- Land Management (LM) 112 – *Challenges and Opportunities of Land Tenure in the Pacific*, offered by the School of Business Management. Available in hybrid and face-to-face modalities.
- Biology (BI) 102: *Plant Biology*, offered by the School of Agriculture, Geography Environment, Oceans & Natural Sciences. This is a face-to-face course available to students at the Laucala, Tonga, and Vanuatu campuses.

This is a subset of the examples requested, which included upper division undergraduate exemplars and graduate exemplars, in two different disciplines.

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 has over 40 plus years of experience with distance education, including print and most recently hybrid (blended) and fully online, and currently offers over two hundred programs in online or hybrid modalities. (USP continues to offer a small number of print/correspondence type courses. The university is clear that correspondence study is not within WSCUC's scope. A member of the Senior Management Team confirmed with WSCUC that USP is in the process of and committed to closing out all correspondence study.) Distance education is offered at the undergraduate and master's levels.

Total student enrollment by modality for 2020-2024 follows.

Mode	EFTS				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Distance	11244	11531	9893	8155	8232
Face to Face	6674	6612	5529	6246	6464
Grand Total	17919	18143	15422	14401	14696

Over the last fifteen years, USP has experienced a significant shift toward distance learning. From 2010 to 2018, distance learning grew by 161.6%, and this accelerated post-COVID. By 2024, distance learners comprised a majority of students, with only a fraction still opting for full-time, face-to-face study. [University Triennial Investment Plan 2025 – 2027, pg. 19].

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

Members of the visiting team spoke with USP representatives, including faculty, discipline coordinators (department chairs), deputy heads of schools, undergraduate and graduate students, student support services staff, student learning staff, Planning and Quality office staff, Curriculum Review and Development Unit staff, and members of the Senior Management Team, at the main campus and, if representatives were present, at three off-campus locations: Lautoka, Fiji, Samoa, and Solomon Island. Syllabi for online courses were also reviewed.

Observations and Findings

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
<i>Fit with Mission.</i> 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?	Distance education aligns with USP's vision of accessibility and regional equity, outlined in the 2022–2024 SP and embedded in governance (e.g., Curriculum Review and Development Unit, CRDU) and operations. Distance education programs are planned, funded, and operationalized following USP's standard processes for course and program development, delivery, and evaluation.	

<p><i>Connection to the Institution.</i> How are distance education students integrated into the life and culture of the institution?</p>	<p>USP's centralized student support services provide virtual academic and administrative services for distance learners across campuses.</p> <p>Digital platforms like Moodle, emails, ITS helpdesks, and semester zero allow distance students to participate in academic life, peer activities, and institutional events.</p> <p>Distance learners are included in decision-making through various institutional surveys, student association and councils, and participation in university committees.</p> <p>Distance education students have equal access to welfare and University Services</p> <p>USP runs the Total Experience Survey with relevant information, but the results were not disaggregated to provide insight specifically to distance education student experiences.</p>	
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<p><i>Quality of the DE Infrastructure.</i> Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?</p>	<p>USP utilizes Moodle as its LMS, providing students with access to course materials, assessments, and communication tools. Lecture capture systems are in place, allowing distance education students to access recorded lectures. Students are also able to join lectures synchronously. In this way, courses may not be designed specifically for students at a distance as, in many cases, they are joining face-to-face lectures remotely.</p> <p>The digital infrastructure is supported by the Centre for Flexible Learning (CFL) on the front end and Information Technology Services (ITS) on the back end. Back-ups are maintained to support continuity. In an interview of 8-10 students, it was reported the LMS and infrastructure are intended to be conducive. However, the LMS will go down unpredictably once or twice a semester and students expressed a need to buy their own data plan to ensure internet access, including during exams.</p>	<p>USP is considering shifting to hybrid (blended) and face-to-face offerings only, i.e. no exclusively online courses. With this, and in keeping with recommendation 5 in the team report, it will be important to ensure courses are designed to provide equitable experiences for all students.</p>
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<p><i>Student Support Services:</i> 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?</p>	<p>USP offers comprehensive support services, including academic advising, library, ITS services, financial aid, and student learning support at all 14 campuses.</p> <p>The provision of these services is multi-modal.</p> <p>These services are not centrally assessed. Reports from individual sections/campuses are provided to the line Senior Management Team member. Going forward, it will be important for USP to thoughtfully assess student experiences with these services to ensure equitable access and that services are meeting student needs at a distance.</p>	<p>In line with recommendation 3 in the team report, and to ensure equity in access and support, USP will want to develop and implement a quality assurance process for student services and learning support, including the Center for Flexible Learning, Student Learning Support, and Student Administrative Services, that routinely generates qualitative and quantitative data regarding the effectiveness of these services for students at a distance. This work can supplement and inform section review.</p>
<p><i>Faculty.</i> 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?</p>	<p>Courses are taught by a mix of full-time and part-time staff. Faculty teach both in face-to-face and online modes.</p> <p>Faculty development is provided by the Center for Flexible Learning (CFL), with quality assurance support for curriculum provided by CRDU. CFL utilizes Quality Matters rubrics for online courses.</p> <p>As discussed with deputy head of schools for learning and teaching and faculty, faculty are deeply involved in program design, including ensuring alignment of assignments and exams to course and program learning outcomes.</p>	

<p><i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> 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.)</p>	<p>Faculty with the support of staff in the CRDU and CFL, discipline coordinators, and deputy heads of schools for learning and teaching, collaborate on distance education program design. All courses undergo standard approval processes and curriculum mapping to ensure alignment with learning outcomes. Distance education programs are identical in content and assessment to on-ground offerings. It is broadly understood that students in distance education courses generally pass at lower rates than face-to-face students. This is an area for ongoing attention.</p>	<p>To improve equity in student outcomes, USP is considering shifting to hybrid (blended) and face-to-face offerings only, i.e., no exclusively online courses. In keeping with recommendation 5 in the team report, it will be important for USP to act in support of achieving equitable student experiences, retention and completion rates, and learning outcomes.</p>
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<p><i>Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction”? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as student/instructor substantive interaction”?</p>	<p>USP ensures faculty-initiated, regular, and substantive interaction through structured course delivery on Moodle, ongoing lecturer engagement, and staff training in digital pedagogy. Faculty are required to maintain consistent academic contact with students throughout the semester.</p> <p>Substantive interaction includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct instruction via recorded lectures or live sessions • Tutorials • Timely feedback on assessments and active participation in discussion boards • Scheduled virtual/F2F consultations and academic guidance • Moderated peer activities <p>The expectation is that of every three hours of class, one hour is focused on faculty student interaction.</p> <p>Compliance is monitored by the deputy heads of schools for learning and teaching. They have access to Moodle and do monitor faculty-initiated interaction with students both synchronously and asynchronously.</p>	
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<p><i>Academic Engagement.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “Academic Engagement”? How is compliance monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement?</p>	<p>Academic engagement happens in a multitude of ways. Examples include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of assigned readings, assessments, and discussion forum posting • Participation in lectures (live or recorded), tutorials, and consultations • Engagement in group work, peer feedback, and collaborative learning tasks and discussions • Interaction with course content on Moodle, including quizzes and activities • Submission of assignments <p>The deputy heads of schools for learning and teaching confirmed in person that they monitor curriculum offerings every semester to ensure academic is appropriately planned and implemented. Additionally, each discipline’s Board of Studies and Board of Assessment reviews student work.</p>	
<p><i>State Licensure Requirements.</i> Describe, as appropriate, the institution’s process for disclosing to students how state licensure requirements are met by distance education programs, whether licensure requirements are not met by programs, or whether the institution has not determined where licensure requirements are met by the programs.</p>	<p>Licensure is provided by the national quality regulators via registration for the university itself and its individual programs. USP is registered national regular in Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuata. These registrations are publicly available on regulator websites.</p>	
<p><i>Student Identification Verification and Privacy.</i> What is the institution’s process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?</p>	<p>Student verification happens via secure Moodle login and via Single Sign-on. Turnitin is used to ensure original work for written assignments. Proctorio software is used to proctor online exams. There are no additional student charges for verification of student identity at the time of registration.</p>	

<p><i>Retention and Graduation.</i> 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?</p>	<p>Retention and completion rates for distance education students (particularly online and print-based modes) are lower than face-to-face students. The university is responding with targeted interventions, predictive analytics, and the Student Services Center to improve outcomes. USP is also considering moving to only two modalities: Hybrid (bended) and face-to-face to increase student success.</p>	
<p><i>Student Learning.</i> 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?</p>	<p>Assessment methods are identical across all instructional modes and aligned with CLOs, PLOs, and undergraduate outcomes and university post-graduate outcomes. USP currently cannot track student enrollment by program and modality and, in turn, lacks the ability to systematically compare the learning results, indicators of student success (e.g., retention, graduation), and student experiences of students at a distance versus those onsite. The deputy heads of schools for learning and teaching reported that learning results for students at a distance were generally not the same as those for face-to-face students, consistent with lower pass rates for distance education students.</p>	<p>In line with recommendation 5 in the team report, USP will want to develop data systems that enable the evaluation of student learning outcomes and student success measures by program, rather than exclusively by individual courses.</p>
<p><i>Contracts with Vendors.</i> 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 <i>Agreements with Unaccredited Entities</i>?</p>	<p>At this time, no vendors are contracted to develop or deliver any aspect of distance education academic programs at USP.</p>	

<p><i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> 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?</p>	<p>Quality assurance processes for distance education are identical to those for face-to-face programs. USP integrates DE into its overall quality assurance framework through internal audits, course evaluation surveys and total experience survey feedback, and teaching quality monitoring via the Teaching Quality Committee, a Senate committee. Regarding educational effectiveness, see above.</p>	
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C. Off-Campus Locations Review, as appropriate

1. Lautoka

Off-Campus Locations Review-Team Report Appendix 2023 Handbook of Accreditation

Institution: The University of the South Pacific

Type of Visit: Accreditation Visit

Name of reviewer/s: Maenette Benham, Laura Martin

Date/s of review: April 22, 2025

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all visits in which off-campus sites were reviewed⁶. 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

Site Name: Lautoka Campus

Address: USP Lautoka Campus, Vidilo Street, Private Mail Bag, Lautoka

Campus website URL - <https://www.usp.ac.fj/usp-lautoka/>

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 or additional location by WSCUC)

USP Lautoka Campus is one of the two regional campuses of USP in Fiji, representing the university in the Western Division. The MBA and associated Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma are offered onsite (50% or more of the curriculum is delivered in-person). In 2024, the campus had 27 FTE enrolled in onsite programs. The campus supported an additional 742 student FTE in courses taken via distance education.

At USP and Lautoka, the MBA and Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma are run as cohorts and offered when there is sufficient enrollment. Students may matriculate in the MBA program and earn the Postgraduate Certificate with completion of the first three courses, the Postgraduate Diploma with the subsequent three, and the MBA upon completion of the remaining six.

In addition to its onsite programs, Lautoka students may be enrolled at a distance in programs including, degrees and post graduate certificates/diplomas, offered by USP's schools as well skill-based qualifications and pathways to higher education through USP's Pacific Technical and Further Education unit. The campus also hosts a Confucius Center, which provides Mandarin language classes.

As of 2024, the campus enrolled 767 EFTS. On the order of 95% of Lautoka's students are enrolled via distance education. The campus has 6 academic staff (faculty and teaching assistants) and 20 staff FTE.

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

⁶ See Protocol for Review of Off-Campus Sites to determine whether and how many sites will be visited.

The team's half-day visit consisted of seven meetings during which the following individuals were interviewed.

- Campus Director
- The Campus's two Academic Staff (a faculty member, and a teaching assistant)
- Library staff
- Student Welfare Officer
- Student Learning Specialist
- Customer Relations Officer
- IT Manager

Separate open meetings were held with onsite and distance education students.

A brief campus tour was conducted during which team members visited the library, computer labs, and classrooms.

In preparation for the visit, the campus website was reviewed as well as the USP Accreditation Report and supporting documentation, including additional materials received following the Offsite Review.

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
<i>For a recently approved site.</i> Has the institution followed up on the recommendations from the substantive change committee that approved this new site?	N/A	
<i>Fit with Mission.</i> 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 1.1, 3.1, 3.6, 4.1)	<p>USP's regional campuses are understood to be critical to achieving USP's vision and mission by facilitating the education and research needs of its member countries, and helping to build strong connections to participating governments and communities while providing equal learning opportunities for students across the Pacific. As part of USP's transformation, regional campuses are being reconceived as centers for supporting student enrollment in blended and online education courses and programs offered by USP.</p> <p>Campus planning seems to be the purview of the Senior Management Team (SMT). Planning for curriculum delivery is done by each school's discipline coordinators who</p>	

	<p>determine what courses and programs will be offered to students at the Lautoka Campus (and other regional campuses). For most courses and programs, discipline coordinators are located at the main campus. The Lautoka campus provides coursework that meets the needs of students in this large area. The campus also works throughout the community to provide workforce focused programming as well as cultural activities.</p> <p>The campus director, who reports to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Regional Campuses and Global Engagement, is responsible for administrative operations of the campus. Some administrative staff report to the Campus Director, while others (e.g. the IT Manager) report to both the Campus Director as well as another individual on the main campus. Resources flow from the main campus and decisions made by the SMT.</p>	
<p><i>Connection to the Institution.</i> 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 1.5, 2.10, 4.3)</p>	<p>Many of the Lautoka campus staff are actively engaging with students both on and off campus, at satellite centers, and in partnership with other campuses on island. Students who begin at a distance at Lautoka may complete their degrees at the main campus.</p>	
<p><i>Quality of the Learning Site.</i> 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 2.5, 3.1, 3.6)</p>	<p>The facility is old and while the campus has been able to retrofit their needs within this footprint it does not maximize the use of more advanced digital tools, both formal (group learning academic spaces) and informal gathering of students to build joyful learning communities. The Lautoka campus has very experienced campus director who reports to and works regularly with the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Regional</p>	

	Campuses and Global Engagement.	
<i>Student Support Services.</i> 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 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 3.6, 3.10, 4.34.1)	<p>Overall the campus is served by staff who are committed to student success (e.g., library, student front-facing office, recruitment staff, etc.). Students are served by online advisors from main campus. Via the Total Experience Survey, which is administered annually and centrally to all students, data are collected on student satisfaction with support services. Staff at the Samoa Campus do not receive these data.</p> <p>Students appreciate access to distance education given the distance they live from the campus. They also, however, like to come to campus. They would like more staff resources to support them in person (e.g., tutoring, academic counseling).</p>	
<i>Faculty.</i> 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 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 3.1, 4.8)	A mix of full and part-time academic staff (faculty and lecturers). Faculty and teaching assistants at Lautoka work regularly and directly with their colleagues on main campus, and other regional campuses as relevant, in the development and delivery of courses and curriculum as well as the assessment of student learning. The Director coordinates the delivery of academic programs and actively uses data (provided in reports from main campus) to assist her with decision-making regarding for instance, program marketing and enrollment.	
<i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> 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, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 4.2)	At the Lautoka campus (and USP generally), programs and courses are developed by the faculty of the discipline offering the program. All curricula, including those developed by onsite faculty, are reviewed for approval via USP's standard review process which involves both administrative and Senate	

	review and approval. As a result of these structures, programs and courses are of comparable quality to those of the main campus.	
<i>Retention and Graduation.</i> 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 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)	Retention and graduation rates for the campus's only onsite program are strong and comparable to those other locations where the MBA is offered. The concern is that campus staff did not seem to have access to these types of data.	In line with recommendation 4 in the team report, faculty and staff require access to disaggregated data on student retention and degree completion rates to evaluate the efficacy of campus services and to support planning and continuous improvement.
<i>Student Learning.</i> 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 2.4, 2.7, 2.9, 2.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)	At the Lautoka Campus (and other regional campuses) assessment of student learning is undertaken using the same approach as main campus. Learning results were not provided for onsite programs. However, learning and teaching at this site are part of the quality assurance processes and oversight administered at the main campus.	
<i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> 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 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)	Programs and courses offered at the Lautoka campus are part of the quality assurance processes and oversight administered at the main campus. Evidence that the courses are educationally effective was not provided. Students spoke highly of the MBA program and its applicability to the demands of their current positions.	

Revised, August 2023

2. Samoa Campus

Off-Campus Locations Review-Team Report Appendix 2023 Handbook of Accreditation

Institution: The University of the South Pacific

Type of Visit: Accreditation Visit

Name of reviewer/s: Laura Martin

Date/s of review: April 17, 2025

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all visits in which off-campus sites were reviewed⁷. 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

Site Name: USP – Samoa Campus
Address: Private Bag, Apia, Samoa

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 or additional location by WSCUC)

Located in Apia, Samoa, the Samoa Branch Campus is home to the Agriculture and Food Technology (AFT) Discipline of USP’s School of Agriculture, Geography, Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences (SAGEONS). The Samoa Campus was originally the South Pacific Regional College of Tropical Agriculture (SPRCTA), established with New Zealand Assistance in the early 1960s under the Colombo Plan. In 1977, the Government of Samoa leased SPCRTA to The University of the South Pacific, which became its School of Agriculture (SOA), and later the School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT). In 2021, as part of USP’s restructure, SAFT became a discipline (AFT) under SAGEONS.

The following programs are offered onsite (50% or more of the curriculum is delivered in-person) at the Samoa Campus. As of 2024,

Program	EFTS	Headcount
Bachelor of Agriculture	68	103
Postgrad Dip in Agriculture	8	13
Master in Agriculture	8	13
Doctor of Philosophy	5	5

The MBA and Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma are run as cohorts and offered only when there is sufficient enrollment. (A minimum of 35 students is required to run the program.) Students may matriculate in the MBA program and earn the Postgraduate Certificate with completion of the first three courses, the Postgraduate Diploma with the subsequent three, and the MBA upon completion of the remaining six.

⁷ See Protocol for Review of Off-Campus Sites to determine whether and how many sites will be visited.

As of 2024, the campus enrolled 359 Equivalent Full Time Student (EFTS), corresponding to a head count of approximately 609 students. Per information online, about 30% of Samoa Campus students take courses exclusively onsite; 70% take a mix of in-person and online. The campus has 5 faculty and 52 staff FTE.

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

The one-day visit consisted of eight meetings during which the following individuals were interviewed.

- Campus Director
- Discipline Coordinator for Agriculture and Food Technology
- Four of the Campus's Academic Staff (Faculty)
- Librarian
- Acting Student Welfare Officer
- Student Learning Specialist
- Student Administrative Services Coordinator
- IT Manager

Open meetings were also held with staff and students.

A brief campus tour was conducted during which the team member visited the library, computer labs, classrooms, an instructional lab, and a research lab.

In preparation for the visit, the campus website was reviewed as well as the USP Accreditation Report and supporting documentation, including additional materials received following the Offsite Review.

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
<i>For a recently approved site.</i> Has the institution followed up on the recommendations from the substantive change committee that approved this new site?	N/A	
<i>Fit with Mission.</i> 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 1.1, 3.1, 3.6, 4.1)	USP's regional campuses are understood to be critical to achieving USP's vision and mission by facilitating the education and research needs of its member countries, and helping to build strong connections to participating governments and communities while providing equal learning opportunities for students across the Pacific. As part of USP's transformation, regional campuses are being reconceived as centers for supporting student enrollment in blended and online education courses and programs offered by USP.	

	<p>For the Samoa campus this means physically reconfiguring space on the campus to increase student access to the internet either via a personal device or computer workstation. Campus planning seems to be the purview of the Senior Management Team (SMT). Planning for curriculum delivery is done by each school's discipline coordinators who determine what courses and programs will be offered to students at the Samoa Campus (and other regional campuses). For most courses and programs, discipline coordinators are located at the main campus. The exception is the coordinator for the Agriculture and Food Technology discipline who is located, with faculty, at the Samoa campus. Curricular offerings are communicated via the Student Handbook and calendar which are published annually. The campus director, who reports to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Regional Campuses and Global Engagement, is responsible for administrative operations of the Samoa campus. Some administrative staff report to the Campus Director, while others (e.g. the IT Manager) report to both the Campus Director as well as another individual on the main campus. Resources flow from the main campus and decisions made by the SMT.</p> <p>There is a need to strengthen communication between the SMT and the Campus Director and campus staff. Decisions that affect student access to critical resources including for example computer labs and dormitory space appear to have been implemented without sufficient advance notice to campus staff to enable proactive planning. Campus staff, including the</p>	
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	Campus Director and academic staff, also need access to data to inform planning in support of USP objectives, e.g., to grow enrollment, and to engage in continuous improvement of the programs and services they offer.	
<i>Connection to the Institution.</i> 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 1.5, 2.10, 4.3)	The institution is present at the Samoa campus. A majority of students are taking online courses offered by faculty at the main campus. Students in the onsite agriculture programs have come to the Samoa campus exclusively for this programming. While there are local staff, students may also access services through the main campus, e.g. counseling.	
<i>Quality of the Learning Site.</i> 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 2.5, 3.1, 3.6)	The campus is small. Onsite students are in close proximity to faculty and staff in support of their learning. Students who have come to campus specifically for an agricultural degree may live in the onsite dormitories. With USP's focus on distance education, the campus is being transformed to provide students in distance education programs with onsite access to the internet and/or computers as necessary. Student success is fostered by the onsite Student Learning Coordinator as well as optional in-person tutorials taught by instructors (when enrollment is sufficient to justify a discipline hiring a tutor). In terms of campus oversight, the Campus Director reports to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Regional Campuses and Global Engagement, who is a member of the Senior Management Team.	
<i>Student Support Services.</i> 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 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 3.6, 3.10, 4.34.1)	Onsite at the Samoa Campus, students have access to a library, computer labs (and loaner laptops), in-person IT help, student welfare officer, student learning support, and student administrative services. Counseling is available to	

	students online as well as via a local counselor. Via the Total Experience Survey, which is administered annually and centrally to all students, data are collected on student satisfaction with support services. Staff at the Samoa Campus do not receive these data.	
<i>Faculty.</i> 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 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 3.1, 4.8)	At the Samoa Campus, curriculum is either delivered online by faculty who are located at the main campus (or another regional campus) or by onsite full-time faculty. Adjunct faculty may be hired as needed to offer in-demand courses. These faculty are directly responsible for curriculum development and for assessing student learning. The onsite discipline coordinator for Agriculture and Food Technology is responsible for academic quality control, including course learning outcomes and the assessment thereof; ensuring faculty are following the course outlines and that final exam questions comply with learning outcomes and questions are geared toward the right level. They also sample grading to ensure that assessments are marked properly.	
<i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> 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, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 4.2)	At the Samoa campus (and USP generally), programs and courses are developed by the faculty of the discipline offering the program. For the onsite courses and programs, these are the faculty of the Agriculture and Food Technology discipline. For distance education programs and courses offered to Samoan students, the faculty of the cognizant discipline at main campus are responsible. All curricula, including those developed by onsite faculty, are reviewed for approval via USP's standard review process which involves both administrative and Senate review and approval. As	

	a result of these structures, programs and courses are of comparable quality to those of the main campus.	
<i>Retention and Graduation.</i> 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 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)	Retention and graduation rates for the onsite programs offered at the Samoa campus are comparable to USP data for onsite programs generally, including demonstrating a decline in recent years. For the Bachelors of Agriculture program, first year retention declined from 77% to 63% between 2021 and 2024. Degree completion rates for this degree were not provided. The concern is that campus staff did not seem to have access to these types of data.	In keeping with recommendation 4 in the team report, faculty and staff require access to disaggregated data on student retention and degree completion rates to evaluate the efficacy of campus services and to support planning and continuous improvement.
<i>Student Learning.</i> 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 2.4, 2.7, 2.9, 2.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)	At the Samoa Campus (and other regional campuses) assessment of student learning is undertaken using the same approach as main campus. Learning results were not provided for onsite programs. However, learning and teaching at this site are part of the quality assurance processes and oversight administered at the main campus.	
<i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> 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 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)	Program and courses offered at the Samoa Campus are part of the quality assurance processes and oversight administered at the main campus. For instance, the Bachelor of Agriculture degree underwent program review in 2020, and a follow up action plan executed.	

3. Solomon Islands

Off-Campus Locations Review-Team Report Appendix 2023 Handbook of Accreditation

Institution: University of the South Pacific (USP) Solomon Islands Campus

Type of Visit: Accreditation Visit

Name of reviewer/s: Maenette Benham

Date/s of review: Monday – Wednesday March 24-26 (2.5 days)

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all visits in which off-campus sites were reviewed⁸. 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

New Solomon Islands Campus: PO Box 460, Honiara, Solomon Islands

Physical location: King George

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 or additional location by WSCUC)

Located in Honiara, Solomon Islands, the Solomon Islands is an off-campus location. Two programs are offered onsite (50% or more of the curriculum is delivered in-person): the Graduate Certificate in School Leadership and the Postgraduate Certificate in Business Administration. These programs are run as cohorts and are offered only when there is sufficient enrollment. Enrollment data specific to the location's two onsite programs were not provided. As of 2024, the campus enrolled 1174 student FTE in onsite courses and 1254 student FTE in distance education courses. The campus has 69 total staff FTE; 15 are academic and 54 are non-academic.

On October 3, 2024, USP opened its new campus, about five miles from the original Solomon Islands campus. The new site is fully operational. The old site will undergo renovations to add more lab space, student study space and computer labs and access points. Additional details about the campus can be found in the main body of the report.

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

During the two- and one-half-day visit, both the new and original campuses in Honiara were visited and toured. Meetings were held with the following representatives.

- Acting Campus Director
- Campus's Academic Staff (Faculty)
- Student Learning Support staff
- Librarian
- Center for Flexible Learning staff
- Student Support Services staff
- Student Administrative Services Coordinator

⁸ See Protocol for Review of Off-Campus Sites to determine whether and how many sites will be visited.

- USP COO
- IT Support Staff
- Staff involved in the campus' community building efforts

Open meetings were also held with staff and students.

In preparation for the visit, the campus website was reviewed as well as the USP Accreditation Report and supporting documentation, including additional materials received following the Offsite Review.

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
<i>For a recently approved site.</i> Has the institution followed up on the recommendations from the substantive change committee that approved this new site?	N/A	
<i>Fit with Mission.</i> 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 1.1, 3.1, 3.6, 4.1)	The campuses in Honiara are managed by a campus director. The main campus of USP provides leadership in the areas of program/degree/curricular, and student services, including library and IT resources.	
<i>Connection to the Institution.</i> 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 1.5, 2.10, 4.3)	Every student is taking one or more distance education courses (fully or blended) that is offered at one of the other branch or main campus. While there is a coordinator of student services on campus, the majority of services are offered by USP through main campus or another reg	
<i>Quality of the Learning Site.</i> 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 2.5, 3.1, 3.6)	USP's COO currently has oversight of the Solomon Island Honiara Campus. All campuses fall under the purview of a Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President of Regional Campuses and Global Engagement. Given the growing number of students who come to campus every day, there is already a need to add more space for student independent and small group learning.	
<i>Student Support Services.</i> 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 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 3.6, 3.10, 4.34.1)	With one student administrative services staff member, five faculty, one librarian, and several support staff the campus does a remarkable job of providing students with services. Much is being done online and	

	there is a good amount of peer-to-peer mentoring.	
<i>Faculty.</i> 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 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 3.1, 4.8)	Onsite faculty work together onsite as well as work and meet with their respective peers, departments and colleagues at other regional campuses and the main campus online. Curriculum is discussed that is developed by the system and onsite faculty deliver the curriculum. Increase the number of faculty at this campus across the STEM program as well as business, education, and public health.	.
<i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> 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, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 4.2)	Programs have committees with representatives from across the campuses. The USP system prepares the curriculum and site faculty deliver the curriculum. All students in all programs are required to “sit” in-person for their mid-term and final exams for all their courses.	
<i>Retention and Graduation.</i> 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 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)	Retention and graduation data specific to students enrolled in onsite programs were difficult to interpret. Data specific to students enrolled at a distance from this site were not provided. Data are held at the system-level, however, the new interim leadership and faculty have not yet accessed the data.	In line with recommendation 4 in the team report, it will be important for USP to provide campuses with retention and degree completion data specific to the onsite programs they offer as well as for students enrolled in distance education programs from the site.
<i>Student Learning.</i> 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 2.4, 2.7, 2.9, 2.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)	Assessment of student learning is undertaken using the same approach as main campus. Learning results were not provided for onsite programs. However, learning and teaching at this site are part of the quality assurance processes and oversight administered at the main campus.	
<i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> 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 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)	Program and courses offered at the Solomon Islands are part of the quality assurance processes and oversight administered at the main campus.	