



TEU

TERTIARY EDUCATION UNION
TE HAUTŪ KAHURANGI

Submission of
**Te Hautū Kahurangi | Tertiary Education
Union**

to

Te Pūkenga

on

Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work

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1. Preamble

- 1.1. Te Hautū Kahurangi | Tertiary Education Union (TEU) welcomes this opportunity to respond to *Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work*.
- 1.2. The TEU is the largest union and professional association representing 10,000 academic and general/allied staff in the tertiary education sector (in universities, institutes of technology/polytechnics, wānanga, private training establishments, and rural education activities programmes).
- 1.3. The TEU actively acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the foundation for the relationship between Māori and the Crown. We recognise the significance of specific reference to Te Tiriti in the Education Act and the emergent discourse resulting from this. We also accept the responsibilities and actions that result from our nation's signing of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- 1.4. The TEU expresses its commitment to Te Tiriti by working to apply the four whāinga (values) from our *Te Koeke Tiriti* framework as a means to advance our TEU Te Tiriti relationship in all our work and decision-making – with members and when engaging on broader issues within the tertiary sector and beyond – such as our response to the *Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work*:

Tū kotahi, tū kaha: We are strong and unified; we are committed to actions which will leave no-one behind; we create spaces where all people can fully participate, are fairly represented, and that foster good relationships between people.

Ngā piki, ngā heke: We endure through good times and bad; we work to minimise our impact on the environment; we foster ahikā – the interrelationship of people and the land, including supporting tūrangawaewae – a place where each has the right to stand and belong.

Awhi atu, awhi mai: We take actions that seek to improve the lives of the most vulnerable; we give and receive, acknowledging that reciprocity is fundamental to strong and equitable relationships; and we work to advance approaches that ensure quality public tertiary education for all.

Tātou, tātou e: We reach our goals through our collective strength and shared sense of purpose, which are supported through

participatory democratic decision-making processes and structures.

- 1.5. Our response to the *Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work* stems from our commitment to the whāinga expressed above and our wish to see these enacted in the tertiary education sector and in our society and communities.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. This document aims to summarise and capture responses from TEU meetings with Social Work educators (TEU members), some non-members, and the considerable written feedback received.

3. POSITIVES: What is liked about the new National Curriculum: Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work

- 3.1. There was very positive commentary about the greater inclusion of Mātauranga Māori and a strong Te Tiriti based approach. Some criticism was made that this seemed condensed into Year 1 and Year 4, others felt the spread through the years was adequate. Nobody opposed the introduction of Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work. However, there was almost universal opposition to (and great concern about) its introduction in February 2023 and a more general sense of there still being many concerning gaps and unanswered questions.
- 3.2. The greater possibility of collaboration and dialogue nationally and between sites was seen as positive by many. That said, concerns were raised about what this might look like in practice, and whether it might lead to a homogenised approach minimising local experience and need.

RECOMMENDATION
We recommend that there be a review process established to ensure a good balance between consolidation and local variation in the curriculum.

- 3.3. Several people commented that they liked the fluidity of the learning outcomes; that said, this did come with cautions around how these might be interpreted.
- 3.4. Other positive comments were:
 - 3.4.1. Potential for working collaboratively in research
 - 3.4.2. Potential for closer working with colleagues
 - 3.4.3. Potential for easier student movement
 - 3.4.4. Great to have conversations across sites

- 3.4.5. Learning Outcomes allows some flexibility for regional variation in delivery
- 3.4.6. Graduate Profile – social justice tenets, human rights included (although this is not reflected in course descriptors)
- 3.4.7. Turning out people with professional values not just functionaries
- 3.4.8. Firm commitment to decolonisation
- 3.4.9. Ko wai au, ko hea koe in first year
- 3.4.10. The law, ethics, social policy, ANZ, working in organisations, and community development courses are well constructed
- 3.4.11. Support for the new degree being grounded in Te Ao Māori and strongly support the structure of a Te Ao Māori course in Year 1, another in Year 2, and the Te Tiriti based practice course in Year 3 and in Year 4. This scaffolding was seen to better support our ākonga to be the strong Te Tiriti-based practitioners that are needed both now and into the future. The effort from colleagues to strongly include Mātauranga Māori across all courses, is seen as a big step forward.
- 3.4.12. Given that we must provide social work education that meets the SWRB ten core competence standards, a unified degree makes sense. In favour of shared courses, learning outcomes, assessment, and collaboration on provision.

4. ABSENCES

- 4.1. In approaching writing this section, a simple thematic analysis approach was used drawing on the absences and minimal mentions (those absences raised as concerning by those who have been part of the consultation process to date). The Course Descriptors included in the proposed Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work were used for the analysis rather than the large curricula document (166 pages). The Course Descriptors were searched for key words / concepts / ideas / topics that raised concerns with hui members as not evidenced strongly enough.
- 4.2. While other areas of the Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work document express aspirations – (social justice and human rights for instance) – it is the Course Descriptors and Learning Outcomes that will determine / stipulate what happens in the classroom. The Course Descriptors (Appendix 3) of the main consultation document was converted to a Word document and then searched using the Word Find function. It was felt this was a good place to drill down into what this new degree is likely to look like as it is operationalised.
- 4.3. Looking at the results, it is important to distinguish between words and ideas that are included as **Learning Outcomes** (material that must be taught / covered) and

the 'suggestion only nature' of indicative content. That (without information to the contrary) might best be read as – *you might like to think about teaching this at your site if you want to – (or not)*. At times, the **Ngā Tūtohu o te Kiko | Indicative Content** is linked to Learning Outcomes, and in many instances it is not.

- 4.4. More commentary from TEU Social Work members / non-members would be welcome, but we are aware of the compressed time frames we have been given. We are constrained by the 29 June deadline for submission of commentary and while continuing to seek written summaries and thoughts from all TEU Social Work Educators, we also encourage people and Social Work departments to make their own individual submissions.
- 4.5. The following table aims to identify absences / minimalisations that were noted and commented on by participants in a range of TEU Social Work hui and by those who sent in written commentary. The table is created from a simple word search of the Course Descriptors of Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work and does not use the rest of the document (such as the graduate profile).
- 4.6. Immediately following this table from the proposed Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work, is a comparative table from a currently existing Social Work programme that has been included as illustrative of the differences. As discussed above the terms / word search has been driven by terms and ideas considered important by some Hui participants.

5. Table of Course Descriptors for Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Search

<i>Term</i>	<i>Word occurrence in indicative content only</i>	<i>Word occurrence in Learning Outcomes</i>	<i>Learning Outcomes and course</i>
Migrant	1	0	0
Refugee	3	0	0
Immigration	1	0	0
Family Violence	1	0	
Abuse	1	1	LO 3. Analyse strategies for working with abuse in disability or mental wellness or older people in the social work context. In UNDERSTANDING WELLBEING 3
Whanau Violence	1	0	
Family Violence	1	0	
Domestic Violence	0	0	
Sexual Harm	0	0	
Sexual Abuse	0	0	
Child and Childhood	5	0	
Violence	2	0	
Sexual Abuse	0	0	
Child Abuse	0	0	
Critical Thinking	0	0	
Critical Theory	1	0	

Poverty	0	0	
Inequity	0	0	
Marginalisation	1	0	
Addiction	0	0	
Substance Abuse	0	0	
Oppression	2	1	LO 1 Critically analyse how oppression and privilege impact social groups in national and global contexts. In WORKING WITH DIVERSITY
Discrimination	0	0	
Advocacy	1	0	
Critical	11 – (N.B. typically in instances of critically analysis		
Inequalities	1	0	
Social Justice	1	1	LO 3 Discuss the relationship between wellbeing and social justice in Aotearoa New Zealand. In UNDERSTANDING WELLBEING ONE
Human Rights	0	0	
Environment	2 (but not in terms of the current state of the environment)		
Ecology	0 (one mention of Green social work)		
Climate	0	0	
Global	2	2	SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE 1 Define social work practice and describe its development in a local and global context. WORKING WITH DIVERSITY Critically analyse how oppression and privilege impact social groups in national and global contexts.
Class	1	0	
Deprivation	0	0	
Community Development	1	1	1 mention in course: LO 1 WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES Critically discuss community development theories, concepts, values, and practices in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Feminism / Feminist	1	0	
Sexual Orientation	1	0	
Gender	2	0	
Lesbian	0	0	
Gay	0	0	
Bisexual	0	0	

Transgender	0	0	
Queer	0	0	
Intersex	0	0	
Asexual	0	0	
Takatāpui	0		
Fa'afafine and Fa'afatama	0	0	
Heteronormativity	0	0	
Justice System	0	0	
Academic development / literacy - Learning how to manage in an academic institution	0	0	This is important as so many of our ākonga have had bad previous educational experiences. There is a range of perspectives around how this needs to be approached. From specific courses teaching academic literacy, to embedding academic literacy in every course. One position was that we should tighten our intake criteria to ensure that people who come to social work education are already able to manage Level 5 coursework demands.

6. Comparative example of one Existing Social Work Degree Programme Course Descriptors

<i>Term</i>	<i>Word occurrence in Course aim Learning – teaching and topics</i>	<i>Word occurrence In Learning Outcomes</i>
Migrant	4	4
Refugee	7	5 (And in course title) – Social work with Refugee and Migrant background Communities)
Immigration	3	1
Family Violence	4	4 - (And in course title) – Family Violence Studies)
Abuse	2	1
Whanau Violence	0	1
Domestic Violence	5	2
Sexual Harm	0	0
Sexual Abuse	0	0
Child and Childhood	20	8
Child Abuse	1	1 (Significantly covered in course titled) - Child Protection studies)
Addiction	2	0
Substance Abuse	3	0
Critical Thinking	0	0
Critical	8	0
Critical Theory	1	0
Poverty	0	0
Inequity	0	0

Inequalities / Inequality	3	1 – (And in Course title) - Sociology for Social Practice - Inequality and Social Change The course significantly explores issues of inequity, poverty and injustice drawing on a range of theoretical and practical frames
Discrimination	2	1
Oppression	0	0
Advocacy	7	3 (And in course title) – Advocacy. The course is an in-depth exploration of the theory and practice of advocacy
Environment	0	0
Ecology / Ecological	3 (not referring to the environment)	0
Climate	0	0
Class	2	1
Global	4	0
Stratification	1	1
Deprivation / Marginalisation	0	0
Community Development	9	1
Human rights	5	1
Social Justice	5	3
Feminism / Feminist	7	3
Sexual orientation	0	0
Sexuality	5	2
Gender	26	7 (And in course title) – Gender Studies
Lesbian	1	0
Gay	1	0
Bisexual	0	0
Transgender	1	1
Queer	1	1
Intersex	0	0
Asexual	0	0
Takatāpui	0	0
Fa’afafine and Fa’afatama	0	0
Heteronormativity	0	0
Gangs	0	0
Justice System	0	0
Academic literacy development / Learning how to manage in an academic institution	5	4

6.1. The contrast is apparent. It is recommended that other social work educators also undertake a comparative process. We acknowledge that time limits constrain this activity.

- 6.2. What may not be apparent to the non-social work reader of the above, is that family violence, sexual abuse, child abuse, addiction, substance abuse, racism, class and ethnic discrimination, marginalisation and challenges faced by refugees and migrants make up much of the daily work of social workers. It was the general opinion of the Social Work hui participants and commentators that we need to produce graduates who are educated and skilled in these areas, to do otherwise is a disservice to the broader needs of society, their clients, and the graduates themselves.
- 6.3. For TEU members this cuts across our *Te Koeke Tiriti* which notes we collectively have a responsibility to provide awahi to others and in particular to care for the most vulnerable.
- 6.4. In the opinion of a large number of the participants in our TEU Hui (and those who have also given written feedback) Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work (as proposed to be delivered in February 2023) will fail to adequately deliver in a number of the key areas identified above and will instead harm social work education in Aotearoa.

RECOMMENDATION
We recommend that a working party be established of specialists both from subsidiaries and from the social service sector who deal with family violence, sexual abuse, child abuse, addiction, substance abuse, racism, class and ethnic discrimination, marginalisation, and challenges faced by refugees and migrants. This group should be charged with providing recommendations of how the curriculum may better reflect the daily work of social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

- 6.5. It is also important to note that social work students have often shared similar life challenges to their future clients and that without significant support to manage an academic environment often do not do well. Encouragingly, with academic literacy support they commonly do extremely well with a proportion going on to do post graduate study in areas determined by the needs of the most vulnerable in Aotearoa.
- 6.6. It was a real concern for many hui participants that academic literacy training was not mentioned at all. The absence seems hard to understand given what is known about the history and demographics of those who choose to study social work. (This concern was repeated multiple times).
- 6.7. There were various other harsh comments made by TEU Social Work hui participants that do not easily fit into the above template. The question of social justice and the capacity for Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work to produce graduates with a strong capacity for activist and critical social work was contentious with strong feelings both ways.
- 6.8. The first hui held (and much of the written feedback received) did not believe Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work held much capacity to produce graduates with a strong capacity for activist and critical social work. The second hui was

more balanced with some putting forward the well-articulated perspective that the centrality of Mātauranga Māori, Te Ao Māori, and a deeper commitment to honouring Te Tiriti in Social Work education in and of itself provided a stronger commitment to a more socially just social work practice in Aotearoa.

6.9. Harsh comments made:

6.9.1. What we are looking at is a recipe for a domesticated social work service

6.9.2. A dumbed down social work!

6.9.3. This is a very disappointing move to an old school style of social work best described as: "Aunty Awhi and a cup of tea!"

6.10. Many people commented on the likelihood of graduates from this proposed programme having less capacity to critique government policies and undertake one of the fundamental responsibilities of social work which is to understand human rights and have some capacity to speak truth to power.

6.11. N.B. at no point in the various course descriptors for Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work are Human Rights named, identified, or spoken to. This is a grave concern given the extent to which social work is obligated to work within, and according to, international and New Zealand Human Rights frameworks.

6.12. What was also highlighted by one commentator was a disparity with the requirements of international social work.

6.13. This is a requirement to be as close to the ground as possible in terms of offering solutions at a local level that align with the needs and wants of local communities (sometimes called the principle of subsidiarity). The same commentator also pointed out that internationally social work recognises that Social Workers must be educated to work with the demographic of their region, hence the lack of real attention to Refugee and Migrant New Zealanders is very concerning. As presented, the proposed nationwide curriculum offers some possibilities for a degree of subsidiarity in terms of localised approach, without much detail about how this might be attained and empowered.

6.14. The absence of much mention of inequity / inequality and what sustains these difficult conditions concerned many of the participants in the rushed hui we were able to have.

RECOMMENDATION
We recommend that there be a broad ranging discussion in a series of face-to-face hui with social work educators to discuss how we can ensure that the social work curriculum is based on 'critical social work' to ensure social workers are able to provide awhi but able to do so in understanding the world around them including the socio-economic environment including how race, class, and gender impact on the workings of our society and people's experiences.

7. Academic Literacy

- 7.1. As previously mentioned, this was a topic that was raised frequently within the hui, and for many educators in Social Work there was real anxiety about scaffolding for ākongā, both in terms of content / subject matter and in terms of developing academic capacity. As described, many come to social work education with a great deal of lived wisdom and unpleasant past experiences in the education system.

8. BROADER CONCERNS

9. Transitioning

- 9.1. While there is some possibility of currently offered courses fitting with what the new national unified curriculum offers, what also must be acknowledged is that the contractual obligation we have with students who sign up for a degree is that we must continue to offer that degree. This potentially means teaching two courses (the old and the new) for the next four years. It is likely to extend significantly past that as some students are part-time, and some students occasionally fail courses and need to repeat them. This could mean staff needing to teach two courses for anything between 8-10 years. Effectively this could potentially mean a doubling of workload for staff. The new degree does not make it at all clear how mid-year intakes will be supported, or what this will look like in the context of teaching the new degree and teaching out our existing programmes.

RECOMMENDATION
We recommend that serious and focused attention be given to how the new curriculum will be phased in considering the current high workloads of staff.

10. Matariki Students (Semester 2)

- 10.1. Many Social Work programmes allow for new enrolments at the beginning of Semester 2. This creates a complication that will need to be managed in terms of transitioning. The document as written does not seem to acknowledge this challenge. The current degree has not identified any pre or co-requisites. Possibly this is intentional, as it gives us maximum flexibility. It is important that our ākongā can study part-time, that they can start in February or in July, and that they can take time off study if needed and return easily at a later point. There is little information in the degree document about how any of this will happen, or how our student's need for flexible delivery will be safeguarded. This needs to be clarified.

11. Staff Workload, Impact, and the Responsibilities of Management

- 11.1. What seems almost completely unacknowledged in the proposed document is the enormous impact this change is likely to have on current teaching staff. We are being asked to design and implement an entirely new approach to teaching in the four to five months leading up to February 2023 next year. This period is one of the busiest teaching times. It is a profoundly unreasonable request of teaching staff already carrying a full workload. Overwhelmingly the feedback has been that this is untenable and is likely to lead to a disastrous result. Sponsoring this rushed implementation and providing an inadequate pedagogical experience to new students could be embarrassing to both Te Pūkenga and the current government. Distance educators were particularly concerned about work-load issues because distance teaching usually involves significantly more planning than classroom teaching. A distance educator bluntly stated: “For distance/online programmes this is not doable.”
- 11.2. Given that employers are responsible for the impact of workplace stress on staff, Te Pūkenga needs to address the reality that this kind of rushed implementation (teaching out and teaching in) is likely to impact significantly on the health and wellbeing of staff. It will lead to staff complaints, staff burnout, staff attrition, and a degree of negative media attention.

RECOMMENDATION
We recommend that Te Pūkenga leaders push pause on any attempts to introduce this programme by February 2023 and establish and resource a small working part of current social work educators (those in the classrooms and monitoring placements) to look at mapping out a transition plan for all current staff to review.

12. Other Comments from Written Feedback

- 12.1. There was a hope that the new degree would be more visionary and provide greater flexibility. In particular, see social work education reduced to a three-year core degree, with a one-year internship that gives students an opportunity to earn while they learn, reducing the economic burden of study and the financial challenges of social work fieldwork education. This may be possible within the revised SWRB programme standards, and it does seem quite backwards to be developing the new degree before the PRS is decided.
- 12.2. It was expected that as a national network, we would be able to provide more electives. The proposed degree has only one elective in four years of education, which is very disappointing. Would like to see at least one further elective added. This could also help provide for regional needs. For example, in Te Tai Tokerau a course on working in rural Māori communities would appeal to many of our students. However, we have not been able to offer this in the context of our small cohorts. Within Te Pūkenga this could be possible across a number of subsidiaries.
- 12.3. The new degree does not include an Academic Digital Literacy course. This is a significant concern for NorthTec staff (and staff from many polytechnics). As a

regional polytechnic, many of our students do not start their first year of study knowing how to succeed in a degree level study environment. While we have bridging programmes (etc.), this extends the time students must study (and therefore the economic impact on ākongā and their whānau). When we shifted to the four-year degree in 2016, we ensured that we provided an Academic Digital Literacy course in the first year. This is a very popular course with students, and many report that they would not have succeeded in their studies without it. It is believed to be imperative that this is added into the first year of the Te Pūkenga degree. It is the role of polytechnics to put our ākongā at the centre and make successful degree level study possible.

- 12.4. There are no fields of practice course. This should be added in Year 1, to assist students in understanding what social work is all about. The first year 'professional practice' course seems to have considerable overlap with the placement courses. This could be amended to become an 'introduction to social work,' with the same current indicative content PLUS introductions to different field of practice. I think that is achievable within the 15 credits.
- 12.5. The wellbeing strand is seen by some as too general and is the part of the degree that seems more spacious and open for change. It seems Wellbeing 1 is similar to Human Development, the second is Concepts of Wellbeing and Health Promotion (this could be integrated into other courses), and the third crams together Mental Health, Disability, and Older People. It is recommended that Wellbeing 1 becomes Human Development with a focus on how to work with different age groups (including older people), the second wellbeing course could focus on mental health, addictions, and disability, and the remaining wellbeing course could be cut to offer another elective or make space for other necessary content.
- 12.6. A quick key word search on some of the things believed to be done better in social work education was done (by this contributor). Child protection is not mentioned at all in the new degree. While working with families is included, working specifically with children in a child protection course is important. This could be a compulsory course that replaces one of the 'wellbeing' courses.
- 12.7. Family violence is mentioned once. Sexual violence not at all. Trauma not at all. Suicide, addiction, and poverty are also absent. So, these courses need to be strengthened to make it clear where this content fits.
- 12.8. The second placement course and the second Te Tiriti based practice course have similar learning outcomes. The Te Tiriti based practice course could be shifted to focus more on applied skills, alongside understanding.
- 12.9. Offering the research component over two years is disjointed. Agree that 30 credits are needed to both understand and undertake research. However, perhaps makes more sense for this to be delivered as a single 30 credit course in

the final year. This could be achieved by moving the diversity course or the elective to Year 3.

- 12.10. Curiosity about how we deliver the elective? Could we provide social work specific electives, by utilising the combined strength of Te Pūkenga, rather than simply opening other courses. For example, gender and social work, eco social work, advanced community development, advanced talanoa, etc. It's unclear how we would do this.

13. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- 13.1. What is apparent is that the introduction of Te Ata Māhina Bachelor of Social Work (in the inappropriate unmanageable timeframe and in its present form) is a real risk to the wellbeing of both staff and ākonga. Effective change management recognises that even change that offers improvements needs to be implemented in timeframes manageable by staff. The rushed introduction while so many questions and concerns remain unanswered could be a disaster for social work education in Aotearoa.
- 13.2. The overwhelming majority of feedback argued that to introduce the new national curriculum in February 2023 is to risk a highly visible public disaster. The new curriculum needs at least another 12 months to manage both the process of implementation and a chance to address the absences / gaps that have become apparent as a consequence of this too-rushed consultation. As previously stated, no hui participants or written contributors opposed a nationally shared curriculum. What was almost universally opposed was a rushed implementation likely to do real damage to the Social Work profession and those we serve.
- 13.3. This feedback is intended to be taken in the spirit of critical comments about a field of which we are all passionate about!
- 13.4. What perhaps also needs to be said is that imposing this new curriculum overwrites social work degrees that sometimes have been in upward of 30 years in the making. That kind of evolution over time typically involves long-term collaboration with local communities and a great deal of enthusiastic effort and expertise of the staff. To have this sudden loss creates mamae. For kaiako to pour their thoughts, wisdom and experience into courses that are so valued by the local community as to insist that the Social Work Registration Board (SWRB) make them compulsory and to then see them reduced to – 'might be good to include a little bit about this' – is a wound to the spirit. A hurt to the wairua and mana not just of individuals but the whanau of educators and community who all contributed and fought for this over that time.
- 13.5. In the enthusiastic rush to implementing a nationally shared Social Work curriculum what must also be acknowledged are the losses and hurts this will entail.