GENERAL KAIMAHI MANIFESTO

Introduction

General kaimahi (staff)[1] are essential to the success of Aotearoa New Zealand's tertiary education sector.[2] They provide the professional, technical, administrative, ākonga (student) support, cultural capital, and operational expertise that ensures the smooth running of institutions and enables teaching, research, and community engagement to flourish. Yet despite their central role, general kaimahi often remain undervalued, under-represented in governance, and vulnerable to insecure employment practices and micro-management.

Consistent with Te Hautū Kahurangi | Tertiary Education Union's (TEU) Equity Policy, this policy recognises the intersecting inequities experienced by women, Māori, Pacific, disabled persons, queer, migrant, and other marginalised kaimahi and ākonga. These inequities shape the working lives of many general kaimahi and must be addressed through fair, secure, equitable, inclusive, and responsive workplace practices.

Whare — Our aspiration

We envisage a tertiary education sector where general kaimahi are securely employed, respected, and valued as integral contributors to institutional life. General kaimahi employment is stable and fairly remunerated, with transparent career pathways and opportunities for progression. Their expertise in ākonga services, technical operations, digital systems, libraries, laboratories, health and wellbeing, administration, and other areas is publicly recognised as central to the mission of tertiary education.

Decision-making structures are inclusive, with general kaimahi voices present and influential at every level of governance. Workplaces foster professional development, provide adequate resources, and protect kaimahi wellbeing at all times, and particularly in times of change. Institutions honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and work in partnership with Māori general kaimahi to develop and implement culturally grounded and equitable practices. General kaimahi contributions to sustainability are recognised as vital, with their roles supported in making tertiary education environmentally responsible and future-focused.

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[1] In this policy, "general kaimahi" refers to professional, technical, administrative, and allied kaimahi who are not employed primarily in academic teaching or research roles.

[2] Within the context of TEU policies, 'tertiary education sector' is the umbrella term used to infer the following sub-sectors: polytechnic; PRRISM (private; REAP; research institutes; statutory; miscellaneous); university; and Wānanga.

Pou — Why this policy is needed

General kaimahi face persistent challenges that require a dedicated response. Their work is often rendered invisible, treated as peripheral rather than integral to the educational mission. This invisibility translates into systemic inequities, including lower pay scales compared to academic colleagues, limited opportunities for advancement, and exclusion from strategic decision-making.

Sector restructuring often lacks adequate consultation with general kaimahi and has intensified precarity, with general kaimahi often bearing the brunt of budget cuts and job losses. The overuse of casual and fixed-term contracts undermines employment stability, while rising workloads and digital transformations demand greater adaptability without adequate resourcing or training. These pressures have direct consequences for the quality of education and ākonga experience, as overstretched general kaimahi are less able to provide the support and expertise ākonga rely upon.

Waka — Our actions

To achieve our aspirations, TEU will implement a range of the following actions.

Advocacy

- Campaign for equitable pay frameworks that recognise the complexity and value of general kaimahi roles.
- Advocate for secure employment by reducing reliance on casual and fixed-term contracts, promoting permanent positions as the norm.
- Push for inclusion of general kaimahi in institutional governance and decision-making practices at all levels.

Campaigning

- Highlight the contributions of general kaimahi in public and sector debates, ensuring their work is visible and celebrated.
- Challenge restructures and funding cuts that disproportionately impact general kaimahi.
- Promote the role of general kaimahi in advancing sustainability within tertiary education institutions.

Organising

- Support TEU branches to collect and publicly report data on general kaimahi pay, workloads, and conditions to inform bargaining and campaigns.
- Provide resources and training for members to advocate effectively on general kaimahi issues.

- Strengthen organising networks for general kaimahi within TEU, building solidarity and collective voice.

Partnership

- Work with general kaimahi to ensure Te Tiriti o Waitangi is honoured in institutional practice and decision-making, including opportunities to develop their tikanga and te reo Māori.
- Collaborate with other kaimahi groups to advance sector-wide campaigns that benefit all workers, while maintaining a distinct focus on the unique challenges faced by general kaimahi.
- Engage constructively with institutions and government to secure long-term improvements in general kaimahi recognition and support.

Policy sign-off and ownership details

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