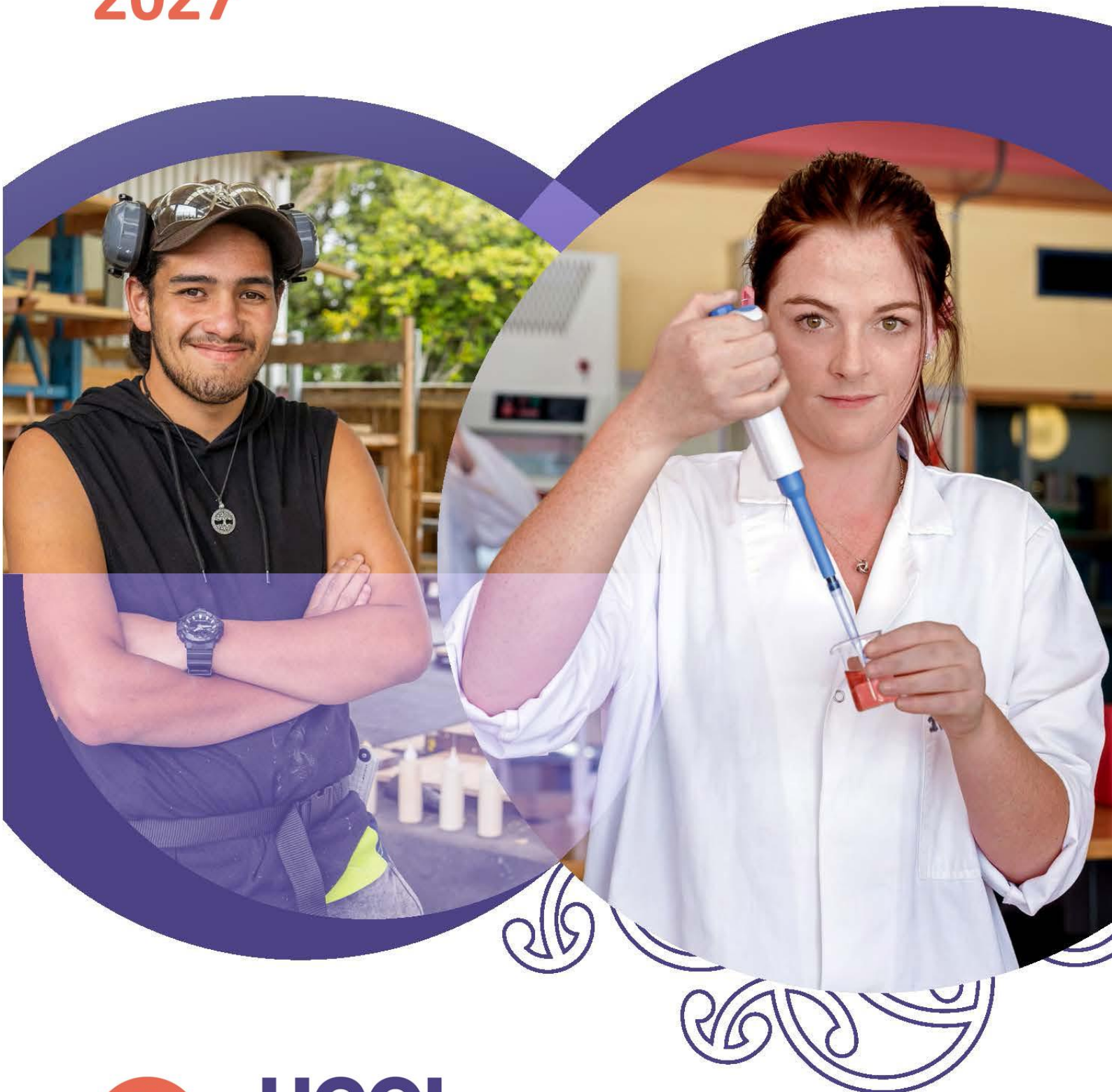


INVESTMENT PLAN

2027



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0. Provider details

Provider name	Universal College of Learning (UCOL)
New Zealand Business Number (NZBN) (if known)	9429053303431
EDUMIS number	6009
Lead contact for Plan discussions This person must have a good understanding of the proposed Plan, be able to access DXP Ngā Kete , and be contactable by the TEC for at least three months from the submission date.	Jasmine Groves Chief Executive

1. Mission and Role

Founded in Whanganui in 1892, UCOL has served the Manawatū-Whanganui and Wairarapa regions for over 130 years, growing into a cornerstone of vocational education across three campuses. Horowhenua and a commitment to the Kāpiti Coast have been in place since 1987.

With nearly 200,000 alumni, over 5,000 current students, more than 300 dedicated staff, and an annual budget exceeding \$50 million, UCOL is both a significant regional employer and an essential contributor to community prosperity.

UCOL's mission is to deliver accessible, high-quality vocational education that empowers learners at every stage of life — whether transitioning from school, entering the workforce, or upskilling alongside employment. This commitment to diverse learning pathways ensures UCOL remains responsive to the needs of its communities and the regional economy.

Within the network of provision, UCOL plays a vital role as a regionally grounded Polytechnic, delivering qualifications and programmes that directly meet local workforce and community needs.

Over the next three years, UCOL will build on its strong performance trajectory while evolving its campus footprint, financial sustainability, and programme mix to ensure long-term viability. Operational stability, disciplined investment, and continued focus on learner outcomes will underpin everything UCOL does.

UCOL's performance trajectory demonstrates consistent and accelerating learner success. Course completions averaging 85% and qualification completions at 83% — sustained and growing year-on-year — reflect a provider that is delivering reliably against its core purpose.

Gains for priority learner groups are particularly strong and speak directly to UCOL's commitment to equitable outcomes. Between 2024 and 2025:

- **Māori** course completions rose **3.5 percentage points to 77.8%**, while qualifications completion **rose 2.8 percentage points to 72.5%**



- **Pasifika** course completions rose **4.7 percentage points to 79.9%**, while qualifications completion **rose 10.8 percentage points to 86.3%**
- **Under-25** course completions rose **2.2 percentage points to 87.1%**, while qualifications completion **rose 6.3 percentage points to 73.1%**

These results reflect more than good intentions — they reflect a locally-led, community-connected model that is working. UCOL's accountability to its learners and whānau is embedded in how we operate, and the outcomes data confirms that this approach is translating into real gains for the communities and regions it serves.

UCOL actively participates in sector-wide communities of practice and best practice sharing, ensuring it remains connected to innovation across the system and continues to lift its own practice. This positions UCOL not only as a strong performer but as a contributor to broader sector improvement.

Through RIV in 2025, hard decisions were made to right-size both the structure as well as its mix of provision. As part of *getting UCOL future-ready*, every aspect of the institute was reviewed for improvement — from people, structures, and programme offerings to property footprint, utilisation, and the way UCOL operates.

During the changes last year, a new Executive role was created with an external focus; early indications now show this role design was not correct for the organisation, so we are moving to introduce the role of Executive Director Māori – Pouārahi. This role will reflect a fundamental shift: rather than delivering a Māori strategy within a bicultural framework, the Pouārahi role recognises Te Tiriti o Waitangi as being foundational to UCOL's identity, decision-making, and obligations. Its purpose is not to “own” Māori outcomes, but to ensure every part of the organisation — every leader, faculty, and policy — gives effect to those obligations, making Māori success a shared responsibility across UCOL.

In 2026, UCOL will have a seven-member council, four ministerial appointments and three appointed by the council. It has a skilled leadership team, with more than half of them having decades of experience in education. Our academic frameworks are in place and have remained so throughout NZIST - 2026 will be the year to refine and strengthen these.

UCOL aligns with the Government's current and medium-term priorities for tertiary education, including the five priority areas identified for improvement within the Tertiary Education Strategy: Achievement, Economic Impact and Innovation, Access and Participation, Integration and Collaboration, and International Education. This is fully demonstrated in the narrative within section 5 of this Investment Plan.

UCOL is actively progressing its approach to giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi more deliberately across governance, strategy, and operations as part of its strategic transition. While this work is ongoing, there is a clear shift toward ensuring decision-making increasingly reflects partnership, strengthening relationships with iwi and Māori stakeholders, and aligning institutional priorities with Māori aspirations for education, workforce participation, and community development. This remains a key focus area as UCOL continues to evolve its operating model and organisational practice and is specifically highlighted in UCOL's Strategic Transition Roadmap.

Eke Panuku, Eke Tangaroa

Strategic Transition Roadmap 2026

In 2025, our strategic focus was on getting UCOL future-ready — strengthening our foundations, stabilising our operations, and preparing for the next chapter.

In 2026, we shift our attention to being future-focused — driving delivery, embedding change, and advancing the development of a long-term strategic vision.



01

OBJECTIVE ONE |

**Future Ready –
Future Focused**



02

OBJECTIVE TWO |

Ākonga at the Centre



03

OBJECTIVE THREE |

**Ko te Tangata te Mea Nui |
It is the People**



04

OBJECTIVE FOUR |

Equity and Inclusion



05

OBJECTIVE FIVE |

Teaching and Learning

2. Addressing the needs of key stakeholders

UCOL serves a diverse learner population, with a slightly higher proportion of female students (56%) compared to male students (44%), and fewer than 1% identifying as gender diverse.

In terms of age, 35% of students are under 19, 29% are aged 19–24, and 36% are aged 25 and over, reflecting a balanced mix of school-leavers and adult learners.

In recent years, around one-third of students studied part-time. However, in 2026, this has decreased significantly to 23%. This shift is likely influenced by external factors, including higher unemployment, which may be driving more learners into full-time study.

International students make up 5% of the student body. UCOL has a strong representation of Māori learners at 25%, alongside 52% who identify as European/Pākehā.

UCOL takes a deliberate, structured approach to understanding what learners need to succeed, with student voice embedded across multiple channels. This includes formal mechanisms such as student surveys, class representative systems, and direct engagement through student support services, alongside more immediate feedback gathered through day-to-day interactions with kaimahi.

Student voice is actively sought and used to inform both operational improvements and strategic decision-making. Surveys provide broad, institution-wide insights into learner experience, while class representatives offer real-time, programme-level feedback that can be acted on quickly.

Engagement with Student Success teams also provides a deeper understanding of the barriers learners face, particularly for those requiring additional academic, wellbeing, or pastoral support.

UCOL utilises systems that inform the SARs (Self-Assessment Reports) to identify and respond early to learners who may need additional support, ensuring timely interventions that improve retention and success outcomes.



This is not a passive process, instead, UCOL take visible actions, communicates back to learners, and undertakes continuous refinement of services, programmes, and delivery approaches. This ensures that learner insights directly shape the UCOL experience and contribute to improved success for all ākonga.

UCOL has a long-standing commitment to working alongside ākonga, industry, iwi, and community stakeholders to understand what is needed for learner success and to ensure our provision remains relevant and responsive.



Through programme advisory groups with strong industry and employer representation, as well as ongoing engagement with iwi, hapū, iwi organisations, and Māori communities to understand aspirations for ākonga Māori.

We also maintain close relationships with employers, industry bodies, government agencies, and secondary schools.

This multi-layered approach provides us with real-time insights into learner expectations, barriers to success, and emerging workforce needs.

The programmes and activities within this Plan are directly informed by these insights. Consultation feedback shapes our mix of provision, ensuring it aligns with regional growth areas and employment opportunities, while also informing programme design and delivery models that are flexible and responsive to learner needs.

We place a strong emphasis on supporting priority groups, including ākonga Māori, Pacific learners, and those at risk of disengagement, including rangatahi not in employment, education, or training (NEETs).

Our collaborative work with secondary schools through initiatives such as Trades Academy (U-Skills), Youth Guarantee, dual pathways, and delivery models like 3+2 continues to deliver strong outcomes and is consistently oversubscribed, demonstrating both demand and impact. 3+2 dual enrolments with secondary schools was first introduced in 2019, this year almost 200 secondary school students will study with UCOL under this model.

All the above gives us confidence that our provision is future-focused and designed to support both learner success and regional workforce requirements.

Strengthening the connection between education and employment is a core focus of our approach. We actively partner with employers and industry to ensure learners graduate with the skills and experience required to transition successfully into the workforce. This includes embedding work placements, internships, and practical learning opportunities within programmes.

We work closely with major employers and organisations such as the New Zealand Defence Force, Department of Corrections, Ministry of Social Development, and Health New Zealand to deliver education, support workforce development, and create pathways into employment.

In addition, our partnerships with Regional Councils, Chambers of Commerce, and Economic Development Agencies help ensure our provision aligns with regional priorities and growth strategies, while also providing internship and employment opportunities for graduates.

We also collaborate with Industry Skills Bodies (ISBs) and Private Training Establishments (PTEs) to support the delivery of off-job training components.

Through partnership, we actively seek stakeholder input and incorporate advice into decision-making wherever possible. This has resulted in formal partnerships and Memoranda of Understanding that support mutually beneficial outcomes, as well as co-designed programmes that respond directly to employer and community needs.

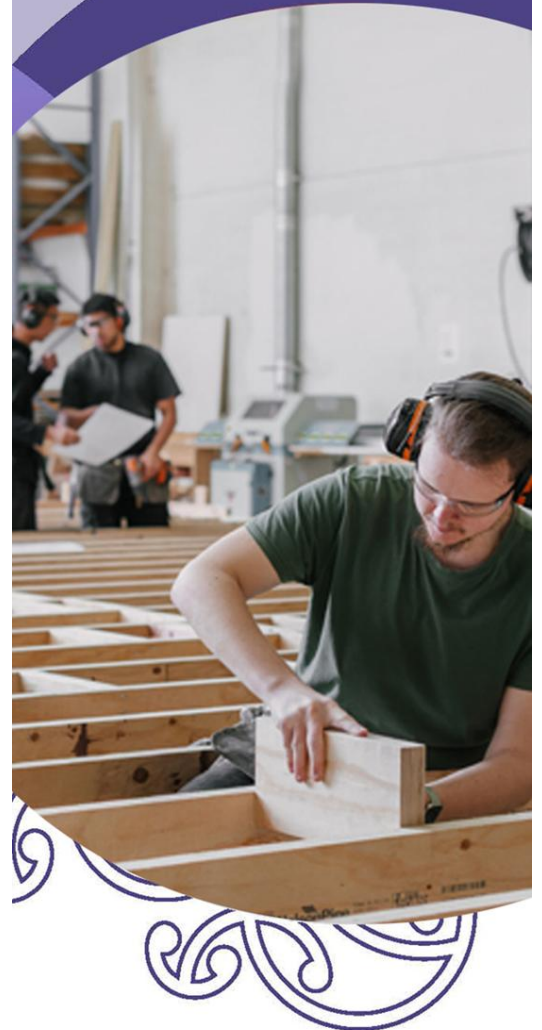
We are also engaged in ongoing conversations with iwi to better align our provision with their aspirations, particularly in supporting pathways for rangatahi, NEETS, and addressing youth disengagement.

We are committed to transparency and accountability in delivering this Plan and will report progress back to learners and stakeholders through a range of channels, including regular newsletters, email updates, advisory group forums, and stakeholder engagement sessions. We will also use public channels such as our website, events, and media to share progress.

We will continue to prioritise learner voice through ongoing feedback mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement.

Progress will be measured through key indicators such as learner success, retention, progression into employment, and stakeholder satisfaction, ensuring we remain responsive and accountable to those we serve.

*Strong partnerships
with employers and
communities ensure
UCOL programmes
remain relevant,
responsive, and aligned
to workforce needs,
producing work-ready
graduates.*



3. Learner Success

3a. Learner success update

UCOL's learner success approach is centred on a whole-of-organisation commitment to improving learner outcomes, strengthening equity, and ensuring learners experience UCOL as a place where they are known, supported and able to succeed.

Our current approach aligns with TEC's expectations that learner success activities are evidence-based, whole-of-organisation, and focused on improving educational outcomes, particularly achievement, access and participation.

Where we are now

UCOL has made progress in strengthening learner success practice across campuses. A key development has been the closer alignment of Student Success services, faculty teams, Te Atakura, disability support, communications, international, and campus-based staff. This has improved consistency, strengthened relationships, and enabled earlier identification of learners who may need support.

Significant progress has been made in:

- Strengthening pre-start communication and transition support;
- Improving early intervention and non-engagement follow-up;
- Building closer referral pathways between faculty and support teams;
- Improving support for disabled learners through individualised support planning;
- Strengthening culturally responsive practice for Māori and Pacific learners;
- Using student voice, surveys and focus groups to better understand learner experience;
- Creating more intentional wellbeing and belonging activities across campuses; and
- Building stronger local community partnerships to support learners where UCOL cannot meet needs alone.

"UCOL is a lovely place, has very lovely and kind people and is just overall a great learning space. The support for ākonga is incredible"



Our work has reinforced that relationships remain UCOL's strongest learner success asset. Learners respond well when they feel expected, welcomed, and wanted before they arrive, and when support is connected rather than fragmented.

What we have learned

Our monitoring, learner feedback, and staff reflection show that good practice exists across UCOL, but it is not yet sufficiently consistent or visible across all campuses, learner groups, and delivery modes.

We have identified several areas requiring further attention:

- Learners returning after withdrawal or study breaks need more deliberate transition-back support;
- Some learners disengage quietly and are not identified early enough;
- Learner voice is not yet consistently gathered from disabled learners and international learners;
- Attendance and progress tracking need to be strengthened;
- Some teaching staff need clearer guidance on pastoral care responsibilities and triage processes;
- Night-time learners have less access to support (Horowhenua);
- Hardship, travel, placement and cost-of-living pressures maybe affecting retention more investigation needs to be done; and
- Evidence needs to more clearly connect support interventions with learner achievement.

This has sharpened our focus. The next stage is less about adding more activity and more about making effective practice consistent, measurable, and owned across the organisation.

Changes to our approach

UCOL's long-term learner success vision remains current: to improve outcomes for all learners and reduce inequitable achievement gaps.

However, our implementation focus is shifting in three ways.

First, we will move from having pockets of strong practice to a more consistent institution-wide learner success operating model.

Second, we will strengthen evidence and evaluation so we can better understand what support is working, for whom, and at what point in the learner journey.

Third, we will make learner success responsibilities clearer for all staff, including teaching staff, general staff, and support teams. Learner success cannot sit only with specialist support services.

This remains aligned with the Learner Success Framework, particularly the expectation that organisations gather robust evidence, use that evidence to inform next steps, and undertake activities that meaningfully improve learner outcomes.

Next stage of implementation

Over the proposed Plan period, UCOL will focus on embedding and evaluating its learner success approach.

The priority areas are:

- 1. Enhancing transition and early engagement.*
Building on the positive outcomes achieved through existing transition and onboarding initiatives, UCOL will continue to enhance pre-start and early-stage support so learners and their whānau understand expectations, know where and how to access support, and develop a strong sense of belonging before study begins. This includes ongoing refinement of pre-start communications, orientation activities, whānau-inclusive engagement, and tailored support for learners returning after withdrawal or study pauses.
- 2. Advancing early identification and response.*
UCOL will further embed a consistent approach to pastoral care across the organisation by reviewing and simplifying triage and critical incident processes. This work will focus on ensuring staff have clear, practical guidance regarding their role in supporting learner wellbeing, including referral pathways and escalation points
- 3. Embedding consistent pastoral care and triage.*
UCOL will further embed a consistent approach to pastoral care across the organisation by reviewing and simplifying triage and critical incident processes. This work will focus on ensuring staff have clear, practical guidance regarding their role in supporting learner wellbeing, including referral pathways and escalation points.



4. *Strengthening learner voice and evidence-informed practice.*

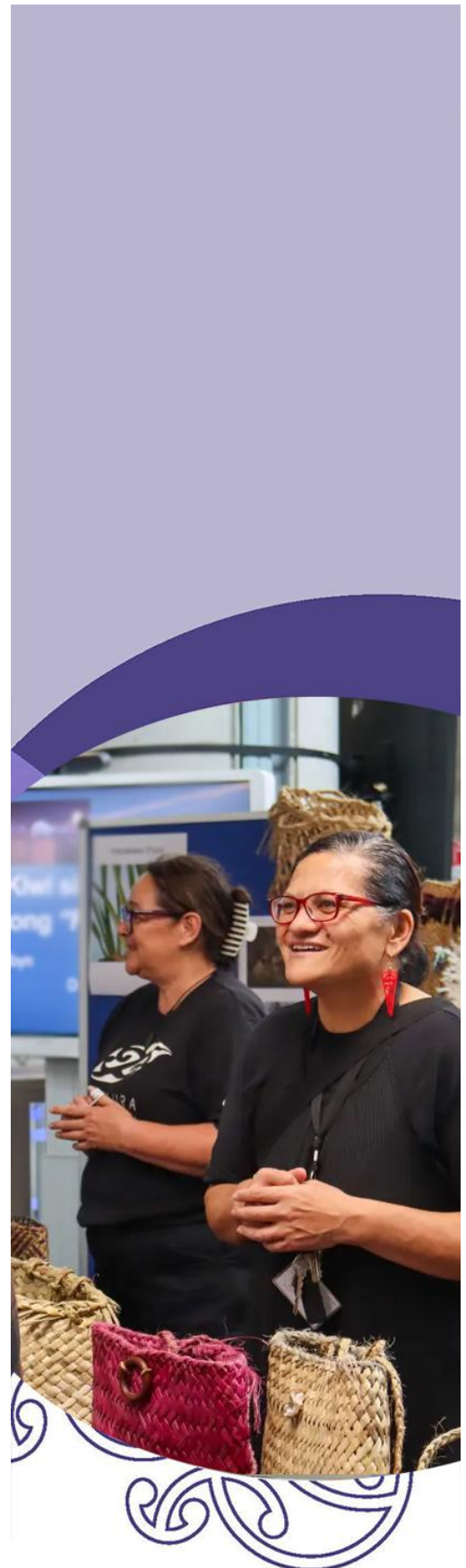
UCOL will continue to evolve its approach to learner voice by strengthening the consistency and coordination of feedback mechanisms across the institution. This will include surveys, focus groups and targeted engagement with Māori, Pacific, disabled, international and other priority learner groups. Insights gathered will be used alongside learner achievement and participation data to further strengthen evidence-informed decision-making and continuous improvement.

5. *Embedding cultural capability and Te Atakura.*

UCOL will continue to embed Te Atakura principles across learner success practice, extending capability development across teaching, support, and professional staff. This work will strengthen the connection between identity, belonging, wellbeing, and achievement while ensuring culturally responsive practice is increasingly reflected in the learner experience across all campuses.

6. *Understanding and responding to barriers to success.*

Recognising the changing economic and social environment for learners, UCOL will continue to strengthen its understanding of the practical barriers that can affect participation, retention, and achievement. This includes factors such as financial pressure, travel, access to technology, placement requirements, and competing work and family commitments. Insights gathered will inform the ongoing development of learner support approaches and partnerships that help reduce barriers and enable learner success.



Expected outcomes

By the end of the proposed Plan period, UCOL expects to see:

- Improved retention and course completion;
- Earlier identification of learners at risk of disengagement;
- More consistent support practice across campuses and faculties;
- Stronger evidence of the relationship between learner support and achievement;
- Improved learner experience for priority learner groups;
- Clearer staff understanding of learner success, pastoral care, and disability support responsibilities; and
- Stronger whānau and community involvement in learner success.

Monitoring and Evaluation

UCOL will monitor progress through a combination of lead and lag indicators to understand both the effectiveness of interventions and the outcomes being achieved for learners.

Lead Indicators

Learner Engagement and Support: UCOL will monitor indicators that provide early insight into learner participation, engagement, and support needs. These may include attendance and engagement patterns, referrals to learner support services, participation in orientation and transition activities, learner voice and feedback opportunities, uptake of academic and wellbeing support services, staff participation in learner success initiatives, and the timeliness of follow-up and intervention activities. These indicators help identify emerging barriers and inform proactive support for learners.

Lag Indicators

Learner Success and Outcomes: UCOL will monitor learner outcomes to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Learner Success Plan. These indicators may include course completion, qualification completion, retention, progression to further study or employment, withdrawals, learner satisfaction, graduate outcomes, and achievement patterns across priority learner groups. Analysis of these outcomes will inform future planning, resource allocation, and continuous improvement activities to support equitable learner success.

UCOL will use this evidence to refine implementation during the Plan period, ensuring the Learner Success Plan remains a practical improvement tool rather than a compliance document.

3b. Support for Apprenticeships

UCOL will adopt a multi-pronged strategy that highlights the return on investment (ROI) for business while providing tangible support for recruitment and training. We will use effective promotions, community engagement, and digital platforms to showcase apprenticeships as a proactive workforce development tool, rather than a time-consuming burden.

UCOL is committed to supporting graduates into apprenticeship pathways. We will actively promote government subsidies, such as Apprenticeship Boost (\$500/ month for first-year apprentices), and showcase apprenticeships as a means of developing loyal, skilled employees who understand company culture. Apprentices are often more committed and bring fresh ideas, improving productivity and staff retention.

Using social media platforms, UCOL will share “day in the life” videos featuring current apprentices to demonstrate programme value and partner with schools to connect directly with potential applicants.

UCOL, together with employers, will support onboarding and mentorship by assigning new apprentices an approachable mentor to guide them through the first weeks, beyond technical skills alone. Clear expectations will be established with an upfront conversation regarding punctuality, PPE, safety protocols, and tool handling. Structured training and on-the-job learning plans will ensure apprentices gain the skills required to become work competent.

UCOL and employers will support training journeys by creating a “safe to stuff up” environment where apprentices are encouraged to ask questions and attempt tasks (even if it takes longer), turning mistakes into learning moments. Apprentices will also be supported to manage workloads during peak periods through regular check-ins, including fortnightly discussions on progress, wellbeing, and emerging issues.

We will discuss recruitment and workplace culture, including competitive remuneration, focus on inclusivity, recognising diverse cultural backgrounds, and creating welcoming environments. To ensure success, UCOL and employers will provide pastoral care, recognising factors affecting training such as confidence, motivation, or financial pressures, and connecting apprentices with appropriate support services.

Employers will ensure apprentices have access to necessary equipment and document progress through training records and regular performance reviews to track skills development. By adopting these strategies, employers can support the development of a robust and skilled workforce tailored to their specific needs.

Historically, UCOL has delivered off-job apprenticeship training for many decades. When identifying and engaging employers, we will leverage these long-standing relationships to identify workplaces capable of providing high-quality work-based learning. Partnerships will prioritise employers who understand training obligations and support apprentice development. Industry associations and employer networks will be engaged to identify proactive employers committed to training.

UCOL will ensure employers have the capacity to train, supervise, and mentor apprentices over a 2-4 year period. By targeting subject matter experts (SMEs), and engaging local chambers of commerce, UCOL will identify businesses able to support comprehensive training opportunities. In identifying prospective apprentices, UCOL will prioritise motivated learners to support strong retention, essential to keep attrition rates low.

Through pre-trade programmes, where students often complete the first year of apprenticeship training, alongside UCOL's highly successful Trades Academy, UCOL is well positioned to place graduates into apprenticeships and respond to industry needs.

UCOL will develop collaborative training plans through tripartite agreements between learner, employer, and provider, to ensure competencies are achieved through structured on-the-job tasks. Employers must be able to provide a sufficient range of work to support competency development. Regular check-ins will monitor progress and wellbeing.

Prior to entering a partnership, employers will undergo vetting to ensure they can act in good faith, provide safe working environments, meet legal employment obligations, supervise apprentices appropriately, support the apprentice in attending off-job training, and agree to UCOL's Training Agreement outlining tripartite responsibilities.

In collaboration with Industry Skills Boards (ISB) and industry partners, UCOL will actively apply the principles of the Code of Practice for NZ Apprentices. Learners will use an app to view competency requirements, standards, and skills to be achieved, sequenced appropriately so health and safety requirements are completed before complex practical tasks. Milestones and assessment targets will be clear and time-bound.

Regular framework reviews involving learners, employers, UCOL, ISBs, or industry partners will align training with workplace projects. Constant monitoring is key to ensuring apprentices can attain the required skills while receiving appropriate wellbeing support. Clear dispute-resolution processes will support all parties.

UCOL's digital student management platform and learner app will provide real-time visibility of on-job and off-job tasks, hours completed, evidence collection (such as photos, logs, supervisor signoffs, and progress tracking). This visibility encourages learner ownership, self-reflection, and forward planning, rather than waiting for a visit. Learners will also be able to access pastoral and learning support, including literacy, numeracy, dyslexia, and related services through these channels.

Pastoral care will be strengthened through the shared responsibility of appointing workplace buddies or mentors, particularly during the first six months, to support physical, mental, and cultural safety.

Establishing strong mentoring systems provides both professional guidance and personal wellbeing support. UCOL will monitor the holistic needs of the learner, including travel barriers, confidence, family obligations, and signs of stress such as absenteeism, behavioural change, or declining performance.

UCOL will continue working collaboratively with ISBs, employers, and industry partners to ensure apprenticeship delivery aligns with industry expectations, codes of practice, and workforce needs.

Continuous monitoring, regular reviews, and strong communication among all parties will support quality delivery, positive learner outcomes, and the development of a sustainable and highly skilled regional workforce.

UCOL Building Apprentice Wins Regional Challenge

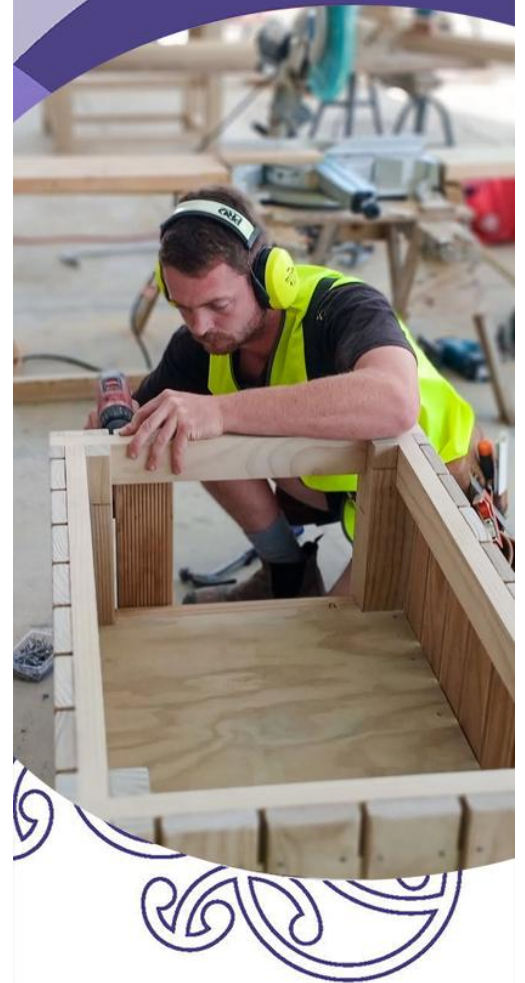
UCOL carpentry apprentice Campbell Poulton was named the New Zealand Certified Builders Manawātū Regional Apprentice Challenge winner in 2025, highlighting the quality of apprenticeship training and industry partnerships supporting workforce development across the region.

Competing against six apprentices from across Manawātū, Campbell successfully completed a demanding practical construction project within an eight-hour timeframe, demonstrating technical skill, planning, attention to detail, and professionalism under pressure. His achievement earned him a place at the national finals, where the country's top apprentices competed.

Campbell's success reflects the strength of UCOL's apprenticeship model, which combines workplace learning with structured on-campus education. Supported by his employer, Brendan Graham Building, and guided by experienced UCOL kaiako, Campbell developed the practical capability, confidence, and industry knowledge needed to excel in a highly competitive environment.

For more than 14 years, Brendan Graham Building has partnered with UCOL to train apprentices, recognising the value that vocational education brings to both learners and employers. The challenge also highlights the importance of collaboration between UCOL, industry training organisations, employers, and professional bodies in developing the skilled workforce New Zealand needs.

"It was great to meet others at the same stage in their apprenticeship and make those new connections in the building industry."



3c. Disability Action Plan Update

What have we learned?

UCOL's experience over the past two years has reinforced the importance of early identification and proactive support. Learners who engage with disability support services before commencing study are more likely to have appropriate accommodations in place from the outset, reducing barriers and supporting successful transition into tertiary education. As a result, disability support kaimahi now proactively contact all learners who disclose a disability during enrolment and work alongside learners, whānau, and kaiako to establish support requirements before study begins, where possible.

We have also learned that specialist disability expertise can be difficult to sustain across multiple campuses. In response, Te Mana Tauria introduced cross-campus knowledge sharing to better utilise specialist expertise, build capability within existing teams, and improve consistency of support. Early feedback has been positive, and a review of this approach will be undertaken to identify further improvements.

The establishment of a Neurodiversity Community of Practice in Whanganui highlighted the value of bringing together kaiako and support kaimahi to share knowledge, practical approaches, and learner support strategies. Through this work, UCOL recognised that improving outcomes for disabled and neurodiverse ākonga requires not only specialist support services, but also greater awareness, understanding, and confidence across the wider organisation. As a result, the Community of Practice will be expanded to Manawātū and Wairarapa campuses and supported through a Neurodiversity SharePoint resource hub to improve access to resources, information, and good practice.

Alongside this, UCOL is about to join the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme across all its campuses. The scheme provides a simple and voluntary way for learners with non-visible disabilities, chronic health conditions, mental health challenges, or neurodiversity to indicate they may require additional support, patience, understanding, or flexibility. Early feedback from kaimahi and learners has highlighted the value of creating visible opportunities for conversations about support and inclusion.

Alongside these initiatives, UCOL continues to build disability awareness and capability through quarterly engagement activities involving ākonga, kaiako and kaimahi, ongoing disability confidence and neurodiversity training, and strengthened learner support processes. A particular focus has been ensuring support plans are developed collaboratively, with a target that at least 75% are developed in partnership with ākonga, kaiako, and support kaimahi. Collectively, these initiatives are helping to strengthen kaimahi capability, increase awareness of hidden disabilities, reduce stigma, and create a more inclusive learning environment where disabled ākonga feel recognised, supported, and able to participate fully in their learning.

Where will we go next?

Over the term of this Investment Plan, UCOL will continue to build on initiatives already underway rather than introducing entirely new programmes.

A key focus will be strengthening learner voice. Disabled ākonga are represented through student feedback mechanisms, including Student Representative groups and learner surveys. UCOL will continue to explore opportunities for more structured engagement, including the establishment of a disability reference group involving learners, kaimahi and community stakeholders. This will support the co-design of future improvements and ensure disabled learners have a stronger voice in decisions that affect them.

UCOL will continue to strengthen kaimahi capability through disability confidence training, neurodiversity awareness, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Building culturally safe environment, for Māori and Pasifika with disabilities is enabled with the collaboration between Raukura (Māori and Pasifika support) and disability and learning support, and Te Atakura our culturally responsive, relationships-based approach.

Disability awareness should be considered for incorporation into kaimahi induction for both academic and general kaimahi, while Communities of Practice and the Neurodiversity SharePoint resource will continue to provide practical support for kaiako and learner support teams.

Complementing this work, UCOL will introduce the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme across campuses. The scheme provides a practical way for learners with non-visible disabilities, chronic health conditions, mental health challenges, or neurodiversity to indicate they may require additional understanding, support, patience, or flexibility. Together, these initiatives are helping build kaimahi confidence, improve awareness of hidden disabilities, reduce stigma, and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for ākonga.

Building on work already completed, UCOL will continue to review disability-related policies and procedures, improve accessibility planning for buildings and services, and begin to embed the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme across campuses. UCOL has also identified the procurement of dyslexia screening tools as a priority after recognising that the financial cost and long wait times associated with formal diagnosis can create barriers to support.

Currently, kaimahi who work in disability and Te Mana Tauira (Student Success) managers receive a weekly Arion report which lists learners who identify as having a disability (on their enrolment form) as well as requests for support/no support. The improved tracking of enrolment, retention, and progress via a Power BI dashboard (attendance /progress apps) cross-referenced with those learners who have indicated, will enable early notification of concerns and any gaps in support. It will also enable earlier identification of those who are struggling and didn't identify as having a disability.

A significant focus over the next phase will be on strengthening the use of data. Development of Power BI reporting will provide improved visibility of disabled learner enrolment, retention, progression and success, enabling earlier interventions and more informed decision-making. As data quality improves, UCOL will establish baseline measures and performance indicators to better evaluate the effectiveness of disability support initiatives.

What outcomes do we expect to see?

Through these activities, UCOL expects to see:

- More disabled learners engaging with support services before and during study;
- Increased learner participation in feedback and co-design activities;
- Greater kaimahi confidence supporting disabled and neurodiverse learners;
- Improved consistency of disability support practices across campuses;
- Better visibility of learner outcomes through enhanced reporting and monitoring;
- Continued improvement in retention, course completion, and qualification completion outcomes for disabled learners; and
- Improved learner feedback regarding accessibility, inclusion, and belonging.

How will we measure success and influence future planning

UCOL will use a combination of lead and lag indicators to understand both how effectively initiatives are being implemented and whether they are making a meaningful difference for disabled ākonga.

Information gathered through learner voice, support service engagement, kaimahi capability development, accessibility reviews, and learner success data will be used to monitor progress, inform decision-making, and identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

This approach supports an evidence-based Disability Action Plan that evolves over time in response to learner needs, emerging good practice, and organisational learning. It will also need to carefully align with Kia Ōrite and its ten-point plan.

Lead Indicators

Kaimahi Training and Capability: UCOL will build staff capability and confidence in supporting disabled and neurodiverse learners through targeted professional development opportunities, including resources available through the Kia Ōrite toolkit and the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme. As part of annual professional development and performance conversations, kaimahi will be encouraged to identify relevant training and incorporate disability confidence and inclusive practice learning into their development plans. Progress will be monitored through training participation rates and feedback on increased confidence and capability to support diverse learner needs.

Accessibility: We will work across UCOL to understand any accessibility reviews and any upgrades needing to be completed on physical campuses or digital platforms (e.g. website). We will then put a plan in place to address anything that arises.

Ākonga voice: Attendance or participation rates in specific disability support programs, orientation sessions, or accessing Te Mana Tauira services. Where possible, disabled students/kaimahi advisory groups are to shape policies.

Lag Indicators

Academic Success: Aligned with UCOL Educational Performance Indicator Commitments (EPICs), pass rates, course completion rates, and qualification completions specifically for disabled learners compared to the general student cohort.

Retention and Progression: Through an inclusive and supportive environment, measures should increase for re-enrolment and year-over-year retention metrics for disabled students.

Ākonga Satisfaction: Develop surveys and ākonga voice to capture information in relation to perceived accessibility of the campus and the responsiveness of disability support services, as well as access to information, such as online through LMS or web.

Ākonga Advocacy: Number and resolution time of formal accessibility requests for support, feedback or complaints and timely collation, analysis, and review of learner voice and reporting to senior leadership.

Responsibility and accessibility of Disability Action Plan at UCOL

Responsibility for the Disability Action Plan (DAP) sits across the organisation and reflects UCOL's commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment for all ākonga. Strategic oversight is provided by the Executive Director – Partnerships and Engagement, with operational leadership through Te Mana Taura (Student Success) managers. Delivery of the DAP is supported by roles looking at disability support services, learning support staff, academic staff, student support teams, and front-facing services across all campuses. Progress against the DAP will be reported annually to the Executive Leadership team and reviewed as part of UCOL's organisational planning and learner success monitoring.

CEO	Strategic leadership and accountability
Executive Director - Partnerships and Engagement	Drive equity and inclusive practice across the organisation. A communications plan will be developed in conjunction with UCOL's Marketing and Communication team, ensuring an organisational approach to building awareness and understanding.
Participation in the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme – Organisation wide, starting with front facing kaimahi	Drive institution-wide response following identification. Develop organisational awareness and staff capability to recognise and appropriately respond when individuals choose to identify through the scheme. Monitor implementation and identify opportunities to strengthen accessibility, inclusion, and participation.
Te Mana Taura	Ensuring a consistent approach to learner support, including individual support plans, early interventions, and specialist services. Identify gaps. Initiate Community of Practice groups across each site. Review of policy and procedure.
People and Culture, Academic Quality, and Managers	Plan to build disability confidence across the organisation - training and resources.

Enrolment team, front-facing kaimahi	Safe space to share needs, investigate alternative pathways if expectations don't fit with the reality of programme requirements.
Academic Quality and Digital	UDL principles rolled out with in-house training.
Facilities Management	Accessibility and Code of Practice requirements

This whole-of-institution approach recognises that supporting disabled ākonga is not the responsibility of a single team. Academic staff play a critical role in implementing inclusive teaching practices and reasonable accommodations, while student support and disability support staff coordinate individual support plans, early interventions, and specialist services. Front-facing services contribute by ensuring accessible, welcoming, and responsive learner experiences from first enquiry through to graduation.

Progress is monitored through regular reporting, learner voice mechanisms, policy review, and student success data to ensure accountability and continuous improvement across the organisation.

Where public and ākonga can access the UCOL Disability Action Plan

A one-page DAP summary will be developed to communicate UCOL's commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and learner success for disabled and neurodiverse ākonga. Presented in a simple poster format, it will outline our institutional philosophy, key priorities, and the outcomes we are working towards, helping learners, staff, and the wider community understand what they can expect from UCOL and how we are creating a more inclusive learning environment.

The summary will be widely available through UCOL's public website, staff intranet, student intranet, campus noticeboards, and learner support areas to ensure it is visible, accessible, and reinforces our organisation-wide commitment to reducing barriers and supporting participation, success, and belonging.

4. Research-related Activities

Research at UCOL is shaped by the strength of our academic staff as dual professionals - bringing together current industry practice and academic expertise. This ensures research activity remains applied, relevant, and connected to real-world challenges, informing teaching and supporting industry.

UCOL's research themes of Educational Research; Technology and Simulation; Community, Workforce Wellbeing and Health; and Industry-Specific Research align closely with the Tertiary Education Strategy. They support learner success, workforce capability, innovation, productivity, and positive community outcomes through applied research that is directly connected to industry, employers, and regional needs. Research findings are integrated into teaching and provision, ensuring programmes remain relevant and responsive.

UCOL has an established and growing applied research culture that reflects its role as a provider of vocational and degree programmes. In 2025, degree-teaching staff totalled approximately 65 FTE, with 36.3% achieving two or more verified research outputs over the 2024 – 2025 period. UCOL currently receives approximately \$183,000 (excl. GST) in PBRF-equivalent research funding, reflecting the quality and relevance of research activity undertaken by staff.

Research activity continues to grow, with 49 active research projects identified through the 2026 Research Plans. These projects are closely aligned to programme delivery, and industry needs and include both individual and collaborative research. In addition, 12 staff are currently undertaking Masters or PhD studies, further strengthening UCOL's future research and academic capability.

While UCOL's research activity is performing well, there is a clear opportunity to continue building research capability, participation, and impact. Consistent with UCOL's strategic direction and the aspirations of the Tertiary Education Strategy, the organisation is focused on strengthening research-led teaching, increasing staff engagement in research, supporting provision, and growing partnerships with industry, communities, iwi, and other research organisations.

Educational Research – research into programme delivery, student achievement and experiences, or strategies to improve performance

“UCOL Te Atakura programme evaluation; blended delivery, teaching & assessment within tertiary education; student support strategies; work integrated learning approaches”

Technology & Simulation – research into artificial intelligence and its application across sectors, emerging technology and its application, simulation related to development of student or workforce capabilities.

“AI integration into Accounting, Data Analysis, Health Service Planning (predictive modelling); AI and video/animation development, AI in Science enquiry (); GIS mapping for search and rescue, X-ray simulation in medical imaging, Simulation in nursing competency/workforce development; projection mapping and storytelling/community engagement”

Existing research projects already include collaboration with researchers from other institutes and universities, with a focus on growing these partnerships in 2027. UCOL will also leverage its strong industry and iwi relationships to support applied research projects that address real-world challenges and provide opportunities for staff and postgraduate learners.

International partnerships present further opportunities, particularly through UCOL's developing relationship with Xi'an University in China. Areas such as digital technology and artificial intelligence align with UCOL's emerging research strengths and provide potential for future collaborative research activity

To support this growth, UCOL has recently established a 0.5 FTE Research Coordinator role to provide practical support, remove barriers to research participation, and build organisational research capability. This is complemented by a limited central fund for research and professional development support, enabling staff to undertake research projects and disseminate findings through publications, presentations, and industry engagement.

UCOL is also implementing a research capability framework that recognises staff across a continuum of development, from new and emerging researchers through to research leaders. This approach will enable targeted professional development, mentoring, and succession planning, supporting a sustainable pipeline of research capability across the institution.

Research activity at UCOL is planned, monitored, and reported through an annual research cycle comprising approved Research Plans, mid-year progress reporting, and an annual Research Report that captures research outcomes and verified outputs.

The primary outcome sought is the development of a sustainable and impactful applied research culture that strengthens teaching, supports postgraduate provision, contributes to industry and community outcomes, and enhances staff capability.

UCOL monitors research performance through a range of measures, including:

- Number and type of verified research outputs (e.g. journal articles, conference presentations, exhibitions, creative works, reports, and awards).
- Staff participation in research activity.

Community & Workforce Wellbeing & Health

"ECE staff wellbeing and perspectives; climate change on rural communities, Health system service continuity and patient impacts, mental health support within industry, graduate support and mentoring within industry of new graduates"

Industry Specific Research

"Science (catalysts in fine chemistry, antibiotic producing bacteria in NZ soil, green chemistry and sustainability, iwi processes of pigment extraction and dying); Health (paediatric x-ray procedures, genetic conversations, prediction of health care demand); Creative (bio textiles in creative, art and design practices, cultural storytelling); Business (leadership in not-for-profits, social media and consumer behaviours)"

- Research collaborations with industry, iwi, communities, and other tertiary institutions.
- Staff undertaking postgraduate qualifications.
- Research projects that contribute to programme development, industry innovation, or community outcomes.

To support benchmarking and institutional progress, UCOL will continue to utilise the NZIST measure of research performance: the proportion of degree-teaching staff who have achieved two or more verified research outputs over the previous two-year period.

Looking ahead, UCOL will continue to strengthen its research capability and culture, ensuring applied research remains closely connected to industry needs, learner success, and regional aspirations.

Leading system shift in teaching practice

An example of UCOL's contribution to Mātauranga Māori-informed research is the project undertaken in relation to Te Atakura, supported through Ako Aotearoa research funding. The project explored whether a focus on ākonga Māori learning experiences can positively impact learning experiences and outcomes for all learners.

Te Atakura is a culturally responsive, relationship-based approach grounded in kaupapa Māori values and designed to achieve greater equity within tertiary education. The research found that Te Atakura has become embedded within UCOL, resulting in positive shifts in educator attitudes, teaching practices, and leadership approaches, alongside improved course completion outcomes for both Māori and non-Māori learners.

The impact of this work has been recognised nationally. In 2025, UCOL's Te Atakura team received the Group Category Award at Te Whatu Kairangi | Aotearoa Tertiary Educator Awards, administered by Ako Aotearoa, in recognition of their work advancing diversity, inclusion, and learner success. The framework was recognised for its contribution to improving outcomes for Māori, Pacific, neurodiverse, and other underserved learners.

The findings demonstrate that prioritising indigenous learning experiences creates benefits for all learners and contributes to more equitable educational outcomes. More broadly, this work reflects UCOL's research strengths in educational practice, teaching and assessment, and student support strategies.

5. Further responses to the Tertiary Education Strategy

UCOL is part of the education system in New Zealand and understands that new approaches need to be undertaken, and our role is to deliver real skills, real opportunities, and real outcomes for learners, employers, and communities. We agree that our role within the vocational education system is to teach and train a workforce that uplifts productivity and prosperity.

UCOL is committed to and aligns with the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES), in supporting Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled learners, and other underserved communities to realise their aspirations, improve equitable participation and achievement, and ensure all people can contribute to and benefit from New Zealand's success.

UCOL understands that the environment in which it operates is dynamic and continues to evolve. Rapid technological change, including artificial intelligence, is reshaping how education is delivered, how students learn, and the skills graduates need for the future. Student expectations and career pathways are also changing, while the sector continues to operate within fiscal constraints.

UCOL will continue to monitor local, national and global trends, demographic shifts, school-leaver rates, geopolitical pressures, and other external factors to build resilience to external shocks. This will also support a proactive and informed approach to international recruitment, programme planning, and long-term sustainability.

UCOL aligns with the government's current and medium terms priorities for tertiary education and the corresponding strategy. It aligns with the specification priorities for improvement in five areas:

Achievement

UCOL, through hands-on, real-life learning from skilled teachers, and wrap around student supports, leads students to gain the skills needed to enter meaningful employment. UCOL has strong pathways from school, from unemployment,

UCOL strives to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities and feel respected and valued for their diverse backgrounds and perspectives.



from the Department of Corrections, into education and then pathways into employment.

- Programme evaluation and development for relevance
- Effective Learner Success and Disability Action Plan
- Strong industry and community partnerships
- Pathways from school, NEETS, no education, work or other

Economic impact an innovation

By delivering education that aligns with key priorities and skills, ensures UCOL is a step in the pathway to a stronger economy through skilled students. UCOL also aligns its international recruitment with New Zealand skills shortages. Many UCOL staff engage in research, adding their thinking to drive innovation and find solutions.

- Aligning programmes to New Zealand skills shortage and priorities for growth.
- Active Research Knowledge Transfer Committee, as well as active research amongst academic kaimahi.
- Alignment with sector implementation of ASM/SASM/PASM.
- Blended delivery options broadened to reach more learners.

Access and participation

UCOL has three main campuses, several stand-up delivery sites, and offers a solid range of blended delivery options. Focusing on programmes at all levels from Adult and Community Education (ACE), through levels 1-9, means that people across the region, from all backgrounds, have opportunities to engage with education.

- Promotes access and participation by offering flexible learning (online, face-to-face, part-time).
- Active pathways from school, with services such as Department of Corrections and the Ministry of Social Development.
- Following the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021, to ensure students are well supported.



Integration and collaboration

UCOL is grounded in partnership, from educational delivery, learner exchange, research, to understanding employer, iwi and our communities' aspirations.

- Collaborating with the wider polytechnic network as well as other providers such as Universities, Wānanga, PTEs and ISBs.
- Collaborate and partner with Chambers and Economic Development Agencies to ensure programmes meet regional and economic development.
- Collaborate with iwi for true partnership and participation, and to understand iwi aspirations.

International education

UCOL has developed a three-year strategy, focusing on reinvestment and diversification. This strategy focuses on increasing international students at UCOL by 5% each year, as well as engaging offshore through joint institutes and programmes. Shorter paid education exchanges are also being sought for specific markets, such as Japan.

- Three-year phased international strategy increasing numbers and markets.
- 5% growth seen year on year.
- Several offshore articulations in the form of joint institutes and programmes.
- Development of additional Masters level qualifications to meet the international market.

International students bring valuable diversity to campus, enriching the learner experience while supporting UCOL's sustainability and growth.



6. Delivering Programmes and Activities, and Responding to Investment Priorities

UCOL's proposed provision within its TEC Investment Plan reflects a deliberate balance between maintaining core regional capability, responding to workforce shortages, supporting learner access and participation, and aligning with Government's tertiary priorities and the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES). It also needs to align with its core purpose of being a community polytechnic catering to the needs of the communities and industries we serve.

A significant focus remains on the sectors identified as national and regional priorities, with UCOL planning to maintain or increase provision in areas including construction and infrastructure, health, science, te reo Māori, and early childhood teacher education. These areas align strongly with workforce demand, infrastructure investment, community wellbeing priorities, and the Government's continued focus on improving participation and outcomes for Māori and priority learners.

The plan also includes targeted increases in several priority qualifications identified within TEC Appendix C: Vocational education targeted priorities. These include programmes in cookery, hospitality, hairdressing, architectural technology, construction management, infrastructure works, information technology, early childhood education, health and wellbeing, automotive engineering, collision repair, automotive refinishing, animal healthcare, and veterinary nursing. These qualifications have been prioritised due to demonstrated industry demand, workforce shortages, and strong employment pathways.

UCOL also intends to maintain provision in established vocational pathways such as automotive, engineering, cookery, food and beverage, hairdressing, transportation, and electrical engineering.

Maintaining these programmes is important to ensuring continuity of regional skills pipelines and supporting local employers and industries.

The Investment Plan also reflects strong alignment with TES priorities around access, participation, and lifelong learning. UCOL plans to continue delivery across foundation education, English language provision, adult and community education (ACE), computing and digital skills, STAR, Trades Academy, and pathways for learners at levels 1 and 2, including those at risk of becoming NEET. These areas are particularly important in supporting equitable participation, transition into higher-level study, and regional workforce readiness.

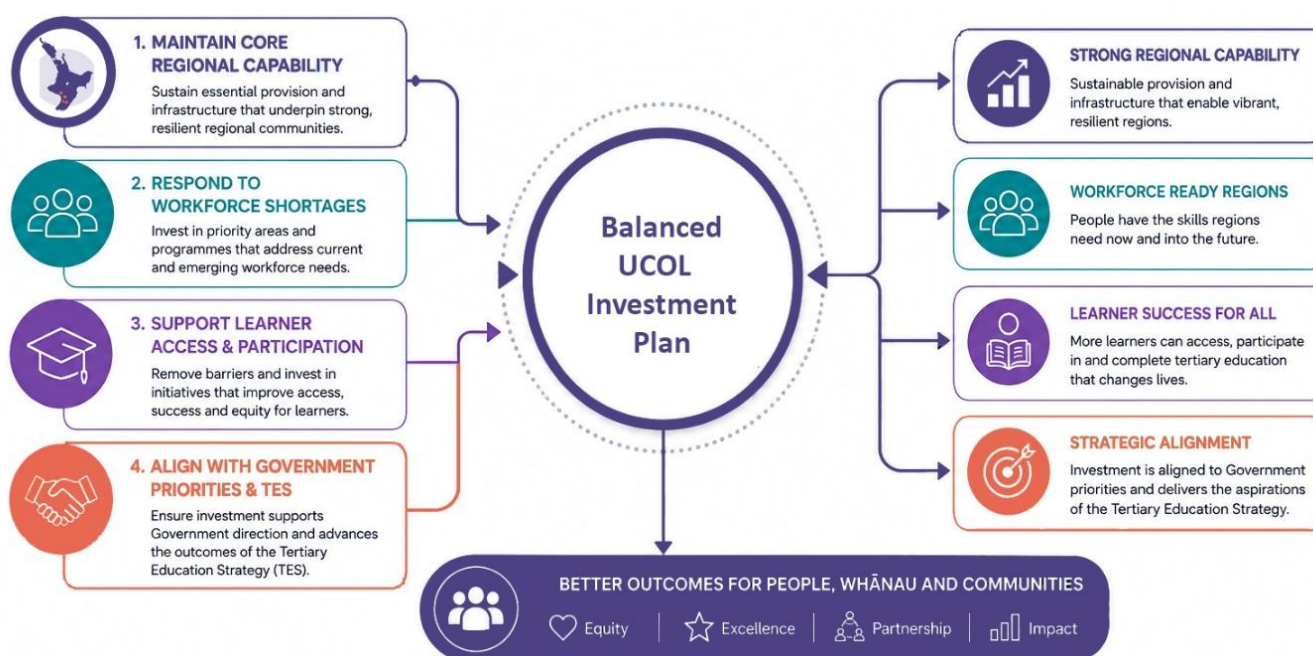
Alongside domestic delivery, UCOL intends to maintain and grow areas that support international education and broader institutional sustainability, including applied science, beauty, business, creative industries, and English language provision.

Overall, the proposed mix of provision reflects UCOL's intent to remain responsive to regional community and industry demand, while supporting Government priorities for participation, vocational education, workforce development, equity, and long-term economic resilience.

UCOL also intends to continue offering a small amount of provision that may not sit directly within TEC's identified priority categories but remains important to the regions and communities UCOL

serves. Through ongoing engagement with community organisations, iwi, employers, schools, and industry partners, UCOL continues to receive strong feedback on the importance of maintaining accessible local provision, particularly in areas such as business, creative disciplines, entry and foundation pathways, and ACE. While these areas may be smaller in scale, they play an important role in supporting learner engagement, community participation, regional capability, lifelong learning, and pathways into higher-level study and employment. Maintaining this provision reflects UCOL's commitment to being a responsive, community-connected institution that supports both economic and social outcomes across its regions.

UCOL's mix of provision reflects a deliberate balance between maintaining core regional capability, responding to workforce shortages, supporting learner access and participation, and aligning with Government's tertiary priorities and the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES).



The proposed changes to UCOL's mix of provision respond directly to stakeholder feedback, learner demand, workforce needs, and UCOL's role as a regional vocational education provider. During 2025, UCOL undertook a significant review of programme sustainability, learner outcomes, and long-term viability across all areas of delivery. As a result of this work, a considerable amount of provision was rationalised to ensure programmes remained sustainable, aligned to demand, and capable of delivering strong learner and employment outcomes.

The 2026 provision mix has since demonstrated strong enrolment performance and ongoing support from learners, industry, iwi, and community stakeholders, providing confidence in maintaining a broadly consistent mix of provision into 2027. As a result, the 2027 Investment Plan is not proposed to be significantly different from the current year, with UCOL primarily intending to increase delivery in areas identified as TEC priorities while maintaining provision in areas that continue to demonstrate regional demand and strategic value.

In relation to new provision, UCOL currently has only two new programmes under development, both at master's level, reflecting a measured and sustainable approach to growth. Programme review remains part of normal business operations and will continue to occur at least twice annually, alongside the formal Investment Plan development process, ensuring provision remains responsive, sustainable, and aligned with UCOL's mission of delivering accessible, community-connected education that supports regional workforce and learner aspirations.

The following matrix has been aligned to the priority programmes and focus areas outlined within the *Investment Plan Guidance* and the *Tertiary Education Strategy (TES)*. A small amount of provision is also being maintained in response to identified community and industry demand. Programmes are summarised by qualification and category.

Increases/Maintain Sector Specific Priorities Appendix B	
Construction and Infrastructure Health Science	Te Reo Māori Teacher Education (ECE)
Increases Targeted Priorities Appendix C	
NZ2101 - NZ Certificate in Cookery L4 NZ2105 – NZ Certificate in Food and Beverage Service L4 NZ2413 - NZ Certificate in Hairdressing (Professional Stylist) L4 NZ2416 – NZ Diploma in Architectural Tech L6 NZ2420 – NZ Diploma in Construction Management L6 NZ2522 - NZ Certificate in Infrastructure Works L2 NZ2596 – NZ Diploma in Information Technology L5 NZ2851 - NZ Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care L5	NZ3097 – NZ Certificate in Automotive Engineering L3 (maintain) NZ4388 - NZ Certificate in Animal Healthcare Assisting L4 NZ4389 – NZ Diploma in Veterinary Nursing L6 NZ4858 – NZ Certificate in Collision Repair L3 NZ4859 – NZ Certificate in Automotive Refinishing L3 NZ2992 - NZ Certificate in Health and Wellbeing Social Services L4
Maintains Aligns with/pathway Appendix C	
Automotive Cookery Electrical Supply Engineering	Food and Beverage Hairdressing Transportation
Increases/Maintain TES Alignment	
Access and Participation (NEETS/LEVEL 1/2/Pathway) Adult and Community Education Basic Computing Skills - Level 1 - 4 Community Education - Metal Trades General Hobby Course English Language Foundation Skills STAR Trades Academy	International Applied Science (LAB) Beauty Business Information Technology Creative/Design English Language
Maintains Community and/or Industry Demand	
Beauty Business Creative/Design	Electrical Engineering Joinery

Additional Delivery of Youth Guarantee, MPTT, Trades Academy and Level 1-2 Provision

UCOL seeks consideration for additional Youth Guarantee, Maori and Pasifika Trades Training (MPTT), Trades Academy, and Level 1–2 provision over the Investment Plan period.

This request aligns strongly with recent Government Budget announcements and priorities focused on increasing participation in vocational education, strengthening workforce pipelines, improving youth transitions into employment and training, and supporting New Zealanders to gain the skills needed for sustainable employment. The recent increase in Youth Guarantee places and continued investment in foundation-level education signals Government recognition of the important role these programmes play in supporting participation, productivity, and workforce development.

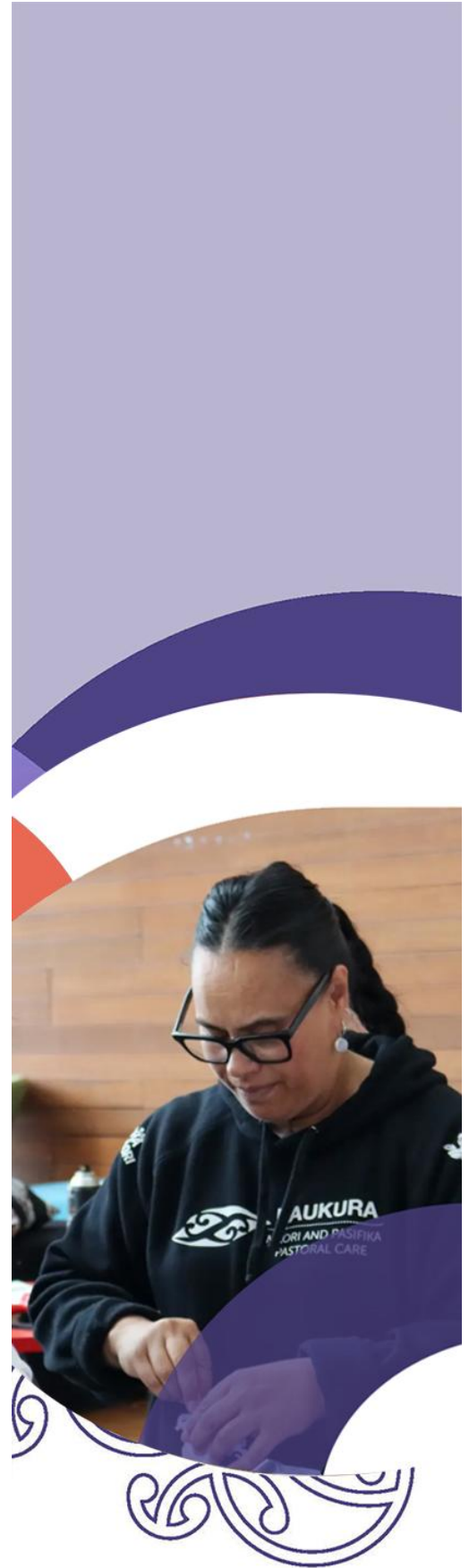
UCOL is well-positioned to support these objectives through established delivery capability, strong learner outcomes, and sustained demand across its regions.

UCOL has a demonstrated track record of successfully delivering these programmes and consistently experiences demand in excess of funded allocations year on year.

Across our regions, Youth Guarantee, MPTT and Trades Academy places are routinely oversubscribed, with demand from both learners and secondary school partners exceeding available capacity. This indicates that existing allocations are constraining participation rather than reflecting learner demand.

Similarly, UCOL continues to experience strong demand for Level 1–2 provision. These programmes provide an important entry point to education and employment for learners who may not otherwise engage successfully in tertiary education. Additional funding would enable UCOL to further support priority learners to gain foundation skills, confidence, and pathways into higher-level study, training, or employment.

UCOL also has a long-standing history of delivering vocational and foundation programmes in partnership with the Department of Corrections and the Ministry of Social Development. These partnerships support individuals to re-engage with education, build employability skills, gain industry-relevant qualifications, and transition into employment.



Additional Level 1–2 provision would further support Government objectives relating to workforce participation, social inclusion, rehabilitation, and reducing barriers to employment.

Additional places across these funding categories would allow UCOL to:

- Increase participation in vocational and tertiary education.
- Support successful transitions from secondary school into tertiary study, apprenticeships, and employment.
- Provide foundation pathways for learners requiring additional support to enter education and work.
- Strengthen workforce pathways into priority industries, including construction, infrastructure, engineering, manufacturing, automotive, health, and primary industries.
- Improve access and achievement for Māori, Pacific, regional, and underserved learners.
- Support regional economic growth and workforce development.

UCOL's established infrastructure, industry partnerships, and delivery capability mean additional places can be implemented quickly and effectively with minimal lead time. Existing relationships with schools, employers, iwi, community organisations, the Department of Corrections, and the Ministry of Social Development provide confidence that increased allocations would be fully utilised and translated into positive learner and employment outcomes.

UCOL has demonstrated both the capability and demand required to convert additional investment into learner success and workforce outcomes.

Additional allocations would not create new demand; rather, they would enable UCOL to respond to existing unmet demand across its regions and further contribute to Government objectives for participation, productivity, inclusion, and workforce development.



Shifting the Paradigm: Early Intervention Through Education, Partnerships and Employment Pathways

UCOL is committed to shifting the paradigm from responding to disadvantage after it has become entrenched to intervening earlier through education. Rather than viewing foundation-level education as an end point, we see it as the beginning of a lifelong pathway that leads to further study, employment, and stronger communities.

Many New Zealanders face significant barriers to education and employment, including low literacy and numeracy, disrupted schooling, justice involvement, unemployment, and limited confidence in formal learning. These barriers are often interconnected, requiring collaborative solutions that no single organisation can deliver alone.

Our approach brings together government agencies, local authorities, community organisations, employers, and education providers to create seamless pathways that meet learners where they are and support them towards meaningful outcomes.

A powerful example of this is the Kick for the Seagulls programme. Developed by Sir Graham Lowe and delivered by UCOL, the 17-week programme uses the language of sport to build literacy, numeracy, confidence, resilience, and life skills. Since 2019, the programme has been delivered successfully within New Zealand's corrections system, where many participants enter with less than two years of secondary education and without NCEA Level 1. Completing the programme enables learners to achieve the New Zealand Certificate in Foundation Skills (Level 2), often representing the first formal qualification of their lives and providing the confidence to continue into further education, rehabilitation, or employment.

In 2024, UCOL extended this proven model beyond corrections through an innovative partnership with Palmerston North City Council, Y Central, Sport Manawātū, Police, Oranga Tamariki, Youth Justice, Youth Space and the Lowie Foundation. This marked the first community delivery of the programme in Aotearoa. The inaugural cohort achieved an exceptional 83 percent completion rate, with participants making significant personal, social, and academic progress. The programme demonstrated that when education is delivered in a supportive, strengths-based environment alongside trusted partners, young people who may have previously disengaged from learning can thrive. Many of the students carried on to other study at UCOL.

Building on this success, the Ministry of Social Development joined the partnership in 2025, enabling additional cohorts and strengthening the pathway from education into employment. MSD case managers have recognised the programme as an effective intervention that provides clients with renewed confidence, recognised qualifications, and realistic opportunities to progress into further study or sustainable work.

The partnership has already expanded into targeted pre-employment programmes. In 2025, UCOL and MSD delivered a hospitality short course where every learner successfully achieved three NZQA unit standards covering food safety, host responsibility, and commercial espresso preparation. Achieving a 100 percent success rate demonstrated how short, focused interventions can rapidly equip learners with industry-recognised skills that employers value.

This philosophy extends beyond foundation education. UCOL's long-standing partnership with MSD in Taumarunui provides a clear progression from engagement to employment through construction trades training. Since 2012, learners have completed the Building Construction and Allied Trades Level 2 programme and the New Zealand Certificate in Construction Trade Skills (Carpentry) Level 3. Through close collaboration with iwi, employers and MSD, every graduate has transitioned directly into employment, demonstrating the effectiveness of coordinated education-to-work pathways.

These initiatives illustrate a deliberate shift in investment towards preventative, partnership-based interventions. By investing in learners at Levels 1 and 2, we create opportunities before disadvantage becomes entrenched. Learners gain confidence, literacy, numeracy, nationally recognised qualifications, and clear pathways into vocational education, apprenticeships, and employment.

Our partnerships demonstrate that education is most effective when it is integrated with social services, employment agencies, community organisations, and industry. Together, these organisations create an ecosystem of support that enables learners not only to succeed academically but also to participate fully in their communities and the workforce.

"In the first few weeks, things like eye contact and shaking hands, it wasn't natural for them. You could tell they didn't want to be there, but by weeks five and six, they warmed up and began initiating those things. Now, I'm just beaming with pride. Many of us can't even imagine the challenges this group have faced throughout their lives so to see that self-confidence shine through and have them set goals to create a pathway for a successful life has been fantastic."



7. Outcomes and Performance Indicators

UCOL's Educational Performance Indicator Commitments (EPICs) have been selected to provide a balanced view of learner access, participation, retention, success, and progression, while supporting the organisation's commitment to reducing parity gaps and improving outcomes for all learners.

Collectively, these measures provide evidence of how UCOL contributes to Government priorities, regional workforce needs, and improved outcomes for all learners, with a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika achievement and equity.

The selected commitments cover the full learner journey from participation and retention, through to course completion, progression, qualification completion, and graduate outcomes.

Performance is monitored through regular organisational reporting, including monthly and quarterly reviews, Executive Leadership team oversight, and Council reporting. At a programme level, performance is reviewed through UCOL's Self-Assessment Reviews (SARs) and Faculty Boards of Educational Improvement (FBEI), which provide a structured process for analysing learner achievement, retention, progression, equity outcomes, stakeholder feedback, and programme viability. They also look at post-education outcomes such as employment. These forums enable academic leaders and kaimahi to identify emerging trends, share effective practices, and implement targeted improvement actions.

Results are also analysed by learner group, qualification level, campus, and programme to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Particular attention is given to outcomes for Māori, Pasifika, and learners under 25 years of age. If performance falls below expectations, interventions may include enhanced learner support, curriculum improvements, programme redesign, and increased engagement with employers, iwi, schools, and community partners.

UCOL recognises that formal performance commitments provide only part of the picture.

Quantitative measures are supplemented by learner voice and feedback mechanisms, including Tōku Reo surveys, student feedback, graduate destination surveys, programme evaluations, and employer engagement. Together, these measures provide a richer understanding of learner experiences and outcomes and help inform future planning, programme development, resource allocation, and investment decisions.

UCOL's proposed commitments represent a balance between maintaining strong performance and delivering continuous improvement, while recognising the demographic, funding, and labour market conditions across the regions we serve.

UCOL continues to monitor and report against the EPICs previously submitted through NZIST, which remain the current benchmark for performance measurement. As the successor organisation, UCOL has maintained continuity of performance data, reporting, and quality assurance processes, and will continue to use these measures to track progress, inform improvement activities, and guide future performance commitments.

UCOL's performance indicators reflect a deliberate balance between learner access, participation, retention, success, progression, and completion, ensuring investment delivers both strong educational outcomes and lasting regional impact.



Once the current EPICs framework reaches the end of its lifecycle, UCOL will undertake a comprehensive review to ensure future performance commitments align with the organisation's strategic direction, learner success priorities, regional needs, and performance aspirations as a standalone institution.

8. Financial Information

Financial viability and sustainability are critical enablers of UCOL's ability to deliver on the commitments outlined within this Investment Plan. UCOL's financial forecasts, as submitted through the Tertiary Education Financial Information Model (TEFIM), demonstrate a deliberate approach to maintaining financial sustainability while continuing to invest in learners, staff, facilities, and regional capability. The forecasts have been developed with reference to the Tertiary Education Commission's Financial Monitoring Framework and associated risk assessment thresholds, ensuring that UCOL remains aligned with sector expectations for financial performance and resilience.

The TEFIM projections for 2026 - 2030 show UCOL operating largely within or progressively moving towards the TEC's preferred financial risk ranges across profitability, liquidity, and debt affordability measures. While profitability measures remain slightly below the TEC's preferred range in some years, UCOL maintains positive operating surpluses throughout the forecast period, strong operating cash flows, and debt levels that remain within acceptable affordability parameters. These forecasts reflect a balanced approach that prioritises long-term sustainability while preserving the educational capability required to meet regional workforce, industry, and community needs.

UCOL's financial position has strengthened following significant change in 2025 through disciplined cost management. This will continue with portfolio optimisation, property rationalisation, and targeted investment in areas of strategic growth. The organisation will continue to actively monitor performance against TEC financial indicators and adjust operational settings as required to ensure ongoing viability, sustainability, and delivery of the outcomes set out within this Investment Plan.

9. Statement of Service Performance

The submitted TEIFM shows the 2026 Budget and Forecast and then outyears until 2029, and sets out UCOL's medium-term strategic direction, financial assumptions, and performance trajectory through to 2029.

As this is UCOL's inaugural Forecast Statement of Service Performance as a standalone entity, the forecast period has been intentionally focused on the current forecast year (2026) and the forthcoming performance year (2027). This approach provides stakeholders with performance information that is realistic, evidence-based, and supported by reasonable assumptions.

While UCOL has a clear long-term strategic direction, forecasting detailed service performance over a longer horizon is inherently more uncertain, particularly during the organisation's establishment phase. Longer-term aspirations and strategic outcomes are therefore articulated through UCOL's strategic planning and Investment Plan, rather than through detailed annual performance forecasts.

This approach ensures the Forecast Statement of Service Performance remains focused, credible, and aligned with good practice by presenting performance expectations that are meaningful, achievable, and capable of being reliably measured.

The model supports Executive and Council review and approval prior to submission and will form the basis for ongoing monitoring of UCOL's financial performance.

The FSSP has been developed using the base position of the Council-approved TEIFM May 2027–2029 forecast, adjusted to incorporate:

- 2 June 2026 TEC Indicative Funding
- 8 June 2026 Mix of Provision (MOP)
- Budget 2026 Supplementary Plan guidance

The model incorporates resourcing required to deliver Investment Plan priorities and improve Educational Performance Indicators (EPIs).

Any material risks, constraints, or unfunded pressures arising from this approach are explicitly identified to support transparent decision-making.

Key macro assumptions (inflation and wage growth) are aligned with the Treasury's Budget Economic and Fiscal Update 2026.

UCOL expects continued improvement beyond 2027 as organisational capability matures and strategic initiatives are implemented. Longer-term performance ambitions are outlined in UCOL's Investment Plan and Strategic Intent rather than through detailed annual forecasts.

APPENDIX I: Financial information supporting service performance

Output class: Tertiary Education

UCOL operates under a single output class. Accordingly, the costs associated with this output class represent total UCOL expenditure.

\$000s	Estimate 2026	Projection 2027
Revenue		
Government funding	31,895	31,934
Non-government revenue	21,590	23,905
Interest income	1,152	917
Total revenue	54,637	56,756
Expenditure		
Operating costs		
Direct educational delivery	24,798	24,840
Learner support and services	2,544	2,599
Corporate and administration	21,549	23,004
Non-operating costs		
Depreciation	4,774	4,629
Finance costs (interest expense)	4	0
Total expenditure	53,670	55,072
Operating surplus/(deficit) (before non-recurring items)	968	1,684
Non-recurring items (none forecast)	0	0
Net surplus/(deficit)	968	1,684

Revenue is forecast to grow over the period 2026 to 2027. Government funding remains broadly flat overall, with no material increases in core funding streams. Any uplift is limited to smaller, targeted government funding streams, including Youth Guarantee, Levels 1–2 provision, Trades Academy, and Adult and Community Education (ACE), and does not materially contribute to overall revenue growth.

