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**Tuhia ki te Rangi:  
Teaching and Learning Practices to Support the  
Development of Academic Writing Capabilities  
of Foundation Ākonga Māori**

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A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education  
at Massey University, Te Kunenga ki Purehuroa, New Zealand, 2024.

# Tuhia ki te Rangi

Tuhia ki te rangi

Tuhia ki te whenua

Tuhia ki te ngākau o ngā tāngata

Ko te mea nui

Ko te aroha

Tihei mauri ora

Write it in the sky

Write it on the land

Write it in the hearts of the people

The greatest thing is love

Behold, there is life

The metaphor "Tuhia ki te rangi" symbolises the aspiration to elevate the visibility and importance of supporting ākongā Māori (students/learners with Māori ancestry) in developing their academic writing skills. Just as writing in the sky is visible to all and leaves a lasting impression, integrating this level of support into educational systems can make the empowerment of ākongā Māori a highly visible priority, showcasing the commitment to their success. It suggests an approach that is bold, unmistakable, and accessible, highlighting the significance of providing these ākongā with the tools and opportunities they need to excel academically. This metaphor can inspire educational institutions to adopt transparent,

impactful, and culturally responsive strategies that celebrate and nurture the academic potential of ākonga Māori, ensuring their achievements and challenges are recognised and addressed in a manner as conspicuous and impactful as messages written across the sky.

The metaphor "Tuhia ki te rangi" also relates to teaching and learning practices aimed at enhancing the academic writing capabilities of Māori Foundation ākonga by embodying the principle of making these practices highly visible, celebrated, and universally acknowledged. In this context, the metaphor signifies creating an educational environment where the support for ākonga Māori academic writing is unmistakable and prominent, akin to a message that is clear for all to see and understand.

This approach involves adopting teaching methods that are not only effective but also culturally resonant and inclusive, ensuring that ākonga Māori feel valued and understood. It means prioritising the development of academic writing skills in a way that is as visible and significant as a message written in the sky, impossible to ignore. By doing so, educational institutions signal their commitment to the success of ākonga Māori, elevating the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Furthermore, "Tuhia ki te rangi" suggests an approach to teaching and learning that is bold, innovative, and public, encouraging pouako (teachers/educators) to openly celebrate Māori perspectives and knowledge systems within the academic writing curriculum. It calls for strategies that support and empower ākonga Māori, ensuring their voices are heard, and their cultural identity is reflected in their academic work. This metaphor serves as a call to action for pouako to adopt practices that are as visible and impactful as the boldest of messages, ensuring that the support for ākonga Māori academic writing development is a clear priority for all to see.

## Abstract

Academic writing is essential for success in tertiary education, yet ākongā Māori continue to face barriers and challenges that impact their writing potential. This is particularly evident in the Hikitia te Ora Certificate in Health Sciences programme, where there is a growing need for additional support in academic reading and writing. This qualitative study, grounded in Kaupapa Māori methodology, aims to identify key factors that enhance the teaching and learning of academic writing skills for ākongā Māori in foundation programmes.

The research involved semi-structured interviews with three pouako Māori (teachers/educators with Māori ancestry) and a focus group of nine ākongā Māori who had completed the programme in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences at Waipapa Taumata Rau. Thematic analysis revealed three central themes: challenges in academic writing, supporting factors for writing development, and the role of culturally responsive teaching. These themes informed the creation of four instructional strategies: (1) Use culturally responsive teaching and learning practices, (2) Provide a culturally inclusive and safe learning environment, (3) Use relevant, fun, and interactive learning activities, and (4) Provide comprehensive resources to support learning.

This study provides practical strategies for pouako and tertiary institutions to enhance the academic writing capabilities of ākongā Māori, contributing to the development of more inclusive and effective teaching practices. The insights derived from this research also serve as a valuable resource for other tertiary institutions in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and beyond, aiming to enhance academic writing skills among Māori and Indigenous ākongā.

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## Glossary of Māori terms

Māori Term	English Translation
<b>Ako</b>	To learn, study, instruct, teach, advise
<b>Ākongā</b>	Student, pupil, learner
<b>Aotearoa</b>	New Zealand
<b>Aroha</b>	Love, compassion
<b>Hapū</b>	Sub-tribe
<b>Hikitia te Ora</b>	Certificate in Health Sciences
<b>Hinengaro</b>	Mind, thought, intellect
<b>Ingarangi</b>	England
<b>Iwi</b>	Tribe
<b>Kaitahi</b>	To eat together
<b>Kanohi ki te kanohi</b>	Face to face
<b>Karakia</b>	Prayer, incantation
<b>Kaumātua</b>	Elder
<b>Kaupapa</b>	Topic, policy, matter for discussion
<b>Kaupapa Māori</b>	Māori approach or ideology
<b>Kōrero</b>	Narrative, story, discussion, conversation, discourse
<b>Kura</b>	School/Māori immersion school
<b>Kura Kaupapa Māori</b>	Māori immersion school
<b>Mana</b>	Prestige, authority, power
<b>Mana motuhake</b>	Autonomy, self-governance
<b>Manaakitanga</b>	Respect, kindness, and care for others
<b>Manuhiri</b>	Visitors, guests
<b>Māori</b>	The Indigenous people of New Zealand
<b>Marae</b>	A communal or sacred place that serves as a venue for community gatherings
<b>Māramatanga</b>	Enlightenment, understanding
<b>Mātauranga</b>	Knowledge
<b>Mātauranga Māori</b>	Māori knowledge
<b>Mauri</b>	Life principle, life force, vital essence, special nature, a material symbol of a life principle, source of emotions
<b>Mihi</b>	Acknowledgement, greeting
<b>Mihi whakatau</b>	Welcome Ceremony
<b>Mihimihi</b>	Speech of greeting
<b>Pākehā</b>	A person of European descent, non-Māori
<b>Pānui</b>	Announcement
<b>Pouako</b>	Teacher, educator
<b>Poutama</b>	Scaffolding/step-like progression in learning
<b>Rangatira</b>	Chief, leader
<b>Rangatiratanga</b>	Chieftainship, leadership, self-determination
<b>Tangata Whenua</b>	People of the land, Local people, Indigenous people
<b>Tapu</b>	Be sacred, prohibited, restricted, set apart, forbidden, under <i>atua</i> protection

<b>Tauihu</b>	Common agenda
<b>Te ao Māori</b>	The Māori world, a Māori worldview
<b>Te Kotahitanga</b>	A project to improve the educational achievement of Māori students in mainstream schools.
<b>Te Kei</b>	Stern of a canoe
<b>Te reo Māori</b>	The Māori language
<b>Te Takere</b>	Hull of a canoe/collective impact initiative
<b>Te Wharekura Kaupapa Māori</b>	Māori Immersion Secondary School
<b>Tihei mauri ora</b>	Behold, there is life
<b>Tikanga</b>	Custom, correct procedure, practice
<b>Tikanga Māori</b>	Māori customs and traditions
<b>Tinana</b>	Body
<b>Tino rangatiratanga</b>	Absolute sovereignty, self-determination
<b>Tuakana-teina</b>	A traditional Māori mentoring relationship, where tuakana (older or more experienced) helps teina (younger or less experienced)
<b>Tūpuna</b>	Ancestor(s)
<b>Waipapa Taumata Rau</b>	The University of Auckland
<b>Wairua</b>	Spirit, soul
<b>Waka</b>	Canoe, vehicle
<b>Wānanga</b>	To meet and discuss, forum, educational seminar
<b>Whakamā</b>	To be ashamed, shy
<b>Whakapapa</b>	Genealogy, lineage
<b>Whakawhanaungatanga</b>	Process of establishing relationships
<b>Whānau</b>	Family, extended family
<b>Whanaungatanga</b>	Connection, relationship, kinship

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to provide insights into how the delivery of academic writing courses can be improved to better support the development of academic writing capabilities for ākongā Māori (students with Māori ancestry) in foundation courses/programmes. Drawing on the experiences and perceptions of ākongā Māori who have undertaken the Academic and Professional Development course of the Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences programme at the Waipapa Taumata Rau, and guidance from educational professionals who teach writing skills, this thesis will contribute to research knowledge about what works best for Māori foundation ākongā who are studying health. Although this research is focused on Māori foundation ākongā who are studying health, it is hoped that it will contribute to the development of best practices for delivering academic writing skills to Māori foundation ākongā in other fields.

This chapter provides the background information that framed this research. It will begin by presenting the research topic, including a brief overview of the research aims, objectives and key research question. To provide a context for the study, a brief background of the Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences programme will be presented, followed by a discussion of my experiences and observations working with ākongā Māori. Finally, an overview of the chapters is provided in Section 1.6.

## **1.2 Research Topic**

This thesis presents key insights from a qualitative kaupapa Māori study examining pouako (teachers/educators) and ākonga (students/learners) learning experiences to help inform the delivery of academic writing skills that meet the needs and aspirations of ākonga Māori and those who teach them.

## **1.3 Research Aims and Objectives**

This study aimed to improve teaching practices and ākonga Māori experiences of and access to effective academic writing skills courses by:

1. Developing an understanding of ākonga Māori experiences of foundation-level academic writing skills courses.
2. Developing an understanding of pouako experiences of delivering academic writing skills in foundation-level studies.
3. Examining ākonga Māori and pouako perceptions of the issues impacting ākonga Māori academic writing skills.
4. Identifying ākonga Māori and pouako needs and aspirations for academic writing skills courses.
5. Identifying what works for ākonga Māori in academic writing skills development.

## **1.4 Research Question**

The key research question for this thesis is:

- What are the key factors that contribute to effective academic writing skills teaching and learning practices for ākonga Māori in foundation courses/programmes?

## **1.5 Background**

### **1.5.1 Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences Programme**

The Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences Programme, which this study predominantly focuses on, was established in 1999 and provides an entry pathway for Māori and Pacific ākonga interested in pursuing a career in the health sector. Hikitia te Ora, the Certificate in Health Sciences, was specifically designed for ākonga who may have had limited opportunities to study the full spectrum of applied science subjects (biology, chemistry and physics) at secondary school and for ākonga who need to improve their knowledge in these areas to gain admission to Health and Medical degree programmes. Hikitia te Ora, the Certificate in Health Sciences admits approximately 70-85 Māori and Pacific ākonga annually and focuses on bridging the gap between secondary studies and university. Ākonga enrolled in the programme must follow a programme of two full-time semesters and pass ten 12-point courses with a total value of 120 points. Alongside biology, physics and chemistry, ākonga also complete mathematics, population health, and academic and professional development (APD) courses. The content for the APD course focuses on study skills for the health sciences, such as note-taking, time management, presentation skills, and essay and report writing, while developing critical thinking, confidence, and independent learning. It also supports ākonga in their professional and cultural development to be proud and confident in their cultural identity and whakapapa (genealogy).

Since its inception, Hikitia te Ora, the Certificate in Health Sciences has contributed to building the Māori and Pacific medical and health workforce, with graduates becoming health professionals in medicine, nursing, public health, allied health, health promotion, health research and health policy. To enhance ākonga success, the programme is grounded in

Kaupapa Māori and Indigenous principles, emphasising Māori and Indigenous values and ways of learning. This approach ensures a supportive and culturally relevant environment that promotes ākonga well-being and academic achievement by aligning with Māori cultural practices and beliefs. This is exhibited through various learning activities such as Mana Monday, a space at the beginning of the week to engage in karakia (prayer/to recite ritual chants) and share culture, wānanga (to meet and discuss), which helps foster whakawhanaungatanga (process of establishing relationships) and provides a culturally inclusive learning space, or whānau (family) evenings where the ākonga whānau are invited to a dinner to hear about what the ākonga have been doing, ask any questions, and have a kōrero (discussion) about how they can support the ākonga while they are studying. Additionally, the programme is supported by the Māori and Pacific Admission Scheme (MAPAS), which provides pastoral care to support ākonga throughout their educational journey. A MAPAS Student Support Adviser is allocated specifically to the Hikitia te Ora programme to assist ākonga with any pastoral issues such as accommodation, financial, personal, family or work. They also provide whakawhanaungatanga and peer support through regular cohort meetings and wānanga. Before semester one, they also hold a wānanga to whakawhanaungatanga and allow ākonga to get to know each other so they know their peers before they enter the classroom on their first day.

As an initial step to help ākonga with the academic writing transition into university, a screening check is provided to ākonga during Week 0, an orientation week, to identify if their academic English language skills are appropriate for beginning university study. The screening result does not prevent ākonga from entering the courses they enrol in, but it identifies if ākonga need additional guidance and support with their listening, reading, and writing skills.

Ākonga may receive feedback indicating that their academic language skills are deemed adequate for commencing university studies. Alternatively, if deemed satisfactory with room for improvement, resources will be provided to assist in strengthening their language skills. In instances requiring further evaluation, ākonga will be directed to proceed with the diagnosis process. This subsequent assessment offers an in-depth language profile encompassing listening, reading, and writing skills. Following this, Hikitia te Ora is notified of their results, and ākonga are encouraged to discuss their results with a language adviser. The adviser will then recommend specific language enrichment workshops or courses on campus tailored to meet the ākonga needs. Over the last five years, there has been a noticeable and recurring pattern indicating that many ākonga would benefit from diagnostic assessments alongside additional academic writing support. Internal diagnostic tools used within the university, such as DELNA (Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment), have consistently pointed to a strong need for targeted assistance in academic reading and writing. These trends, while observed informally across several cohorts, reinforce the importance of early identification and tailored support for ākonga.

### **1.5.2 My Story**

I am a proud Māori from Waikato-Tainui. My passion and expertise in Māori learning and teaching are shaped by my academic journey, from not finishing secondary school to being a foundation ākonga, graduating from university, and becoming a Professional Teaching Fellow. These experiences have given me the privilege of contributing meaningfully to the lives of ākonga, inspiring academic excellence, cultural identity, and leadership. My motivation stems from the values and sacrifices of my whānau, which drive me to support ākonga from similar backgrounds to succeed in university and reach their aspirations.

My journey into higher education began with a foundation-level programme after not completing secondary school. As the first in my whānau to pursue university, I entered that space unsure of my place or direction. Finishing the course ahead of schedule gave me a sense of achievement, shifted my perspective on what was possible, and motivated me to continue into university studies. It also led to a tutor assistant role, sparking my interest in helping others learn. This experience opened doors to teaching roles at the Ngāti Whātua Education and Training Centre (Te Puna Mātauranga) and Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. These environments showed me the power of whanaungatanga and cultural connection in education. Teaching became more than a job; it became a way to uplift ākonga Māori, who had often been underserved by the education system in Aotearoa. These early roles deepened my appreciation for kaupapa Māori approaches and the importance of culturally safe spaces. They strengthened my foundation in tertiary education and informed the work I would go on to do in university settings.

At Te Kupenga Hauora Māori, Waipapa Taumata Rau, I witnessed first-hand the complex challenges that ākonga Māori bring with them into university, many of which the foundation and bridging programme is designed to address. These included learning how to learn in a university context, as well as developing confidence in science, maths, and academic writing. Ākonga also faced difficulties with time management, pastoral concerns, and navigating spaces where their cultural identities were not always reflected or affirmed. These challenges stemmed from prior experiences and institutional structures that had not supported or recognised their cultural knowledge, strengths, and ways of learning. This realisation has significantly shaped my research focus: to explore how teaching and learning practices—

particularly in academic writing within foundation programmes—can better support ākonga Māori in ways that are culturally affirming and grounded in kaupapa Māori.

My experience working alongside ākonga Māori within the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences over the last fifteen years positions me as an insider to this research. Insider researchers are those who are part of the community being researched and who bring shared lived experiences, values, and relationships to the research process (Smith, 1999). This positioning aligns with Kaupapa Māori research, which values research conducted by Māori, with Māori, and for Māori, recognising the cultural insight, accountability, and relational depth that insiders bring (Rewi, 2014). As Māori, I have first-hand experience of the systemic and institutional challenges our people face daily. As a pouako Māori, I have seen the impact of these challenges on the educational potential of ākonga Māori; non-ākonga Māori do not experience the same level of challenge. My life and work experiences have cemented my commitment and passion to contribute to the improvement of educational outcomes for ākonga Māori and to explore how teaching and learning practices and processes can be strengthened to support the educational aspirations of whānau Māori.

My teaching philosophy is grounded in kaupapa Māori values such as manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and rangatiratanga. As a pouako Māori and former foundation ākonga, I understand the barriers ākonga Māori face and the transformative power of culturally affirming teaching. These experiences shape my commitment to creating mana-enhancing learning environments that honour whakapapa, foster identity, and support ākonga to thrive both academically and culturally. This philosophy underpins and motivates my research into improving academic writing support for ākonga Māori in foundation programmes.

## **1.6 Thesis Outline**

Chapter One introduces the research, detailing its aim and objectives. It highlights the significance of the study, delving into both its academic importance and the researcher's personal connection, providing context and rationale for the research focus.

Chapter Two lays the theoretical groundwork for the study and presents a comprehensive literature review examining current methodologies in teaching academic writing skills, with a specific focus on the unique educational needs of ākonga Māori.

Chapter Three outlines the qualitative research methodology adopted for the study, describing the specific methods used for data collection and analysis and establishing the research's methodological framework.

Chapter Four presents the qualitative data from the focus groups with ākonga and interviews with academic teaching staff, offering direct insights into the research question.

Chapter Five provides a discussion of the research findings, exploring key themes such as whakawhanaungatanga, the need for culturally inclusive and safe learning environments, and implementing culturally responsive teaching practices.

Chapter Six, the final chapter, offers practical recommendations based on the research findings and identifies potential areas for further research to inspire continued exploration and improvement in the field.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the existing literature pertinent to this study. It aims to critically examine and synthesise the body of research relevant to understanding the factors that both support and pose challenges to ākonga Māori in achieving success in academic writing at the tertiary level. Consequently, the chapter is structured to address the overarching research question of this thesis: What factors support and challenge ākonga Māori to be successful with writing for academic purposes? To achieve a nuanced understanding of the issues at play, the literature review is organised into three thematic categories: the tertiary education landscape in Aotearoa for ākonga Māori, the specific challenges and opportunities related to academic writing at the tertiary level, and the pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing ākonga Māori writing proficiency. This literature review serves as the foundation for understanding the multifaceted academic journey of ākonga Māori and the various factors that influence their success in academic writing.

## 2.2 Māori and Education

The educational landscape for ākonga Māori in Aotearoa has been a focal point of academic inquiry (Airini et al., 2010; Bishop, 2023; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Curtis et al., 2012, 2015, 2017; Curtis & Townsend, 2012; Durie, 2005; Hoskins & Jones, 2022; Macfarlane, 2015; Webber & Macfarlane, 2020). Historically, the Pākehā education system in this country has never been based on an aspiration for the well-being of Māori (Durie, 2003). Rather, as pointed out by several educational historians, for nearly two centuries, the Aotearoa education system has been grounded in ideologies, visions, and promises imported from other

colonialist regions, which have imposed and suppressed the Indigenous dreams and aspirations of Māori (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974; G. Smith, 1986, 1991; L. Smith 1986, 1997, 1999; Simon 1990, 1994, 1998; Simon & Smith, 2001).

Within the educational system, ākonga Māori have encountered systemic challenges that have resulted in disparities in academic achievement compared to their non-Māori peers (Bishop, 2023; Bishop & Berryman, 2006). These barriers include differential access to education and cultural alienation, as educational institutions have historically been shaped by Western pedagogies and values, racism, unconscious biases, and low expectations from educators. Several authors have highlighted that these disparities are deeply rooted in historical colonisation practices that have contributed to educational, economic, and social inequities between Māori and non-Māori groups (Bishop, 2023; Pihama, 2019; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2011).

Recent statistics from the New Zealand Qualification Authority [NZQA] (2022) show that despite an overall increase in NCEA Level 3 attainment (29%) and UE attainment (7%) between 2011 and 2019, inequities remain unchanged for ākonga Māori compared to non-Māori. For instance, in 2019, 46% of Year 13 Māori NCEA Level 3 achievers did not achieve UE, compared to 22% of Year 13 European and 17% of Year Asian NCEA's Level 3 achievers who did not achieve UE. Moreover, university enrolment data from recent years continue to show a decrease in UE attainment for ākonga Māori from 40% in 2020 to 34% in 2022 compared with national UE attainment (53% and 50%, respectively) (Meredith, 2024). This inequity has persisted for over a decade, significantly limiting the opportunities available to ākonga Māori upon finishing school. These limitations may also have long-term impacts on their further study pathways and career choices.

Recent data from the Ministry of Education (2023) also indicates a 7.4% decrease in the number of ākonga Māori who chose to participate in tertiary education in 2022 (42.7%) after graduating high school in 2021. They also state that while the majority (67.0%) of Māori school leavers who attained UE participated in bachelor's degrees and above, a small percentage (10.5%) chose to participate in certificates and diplomas at levels 3-7. Conversely, Māori school leavers who did not attain University Entrance, NCEA Level 2 or NCEA Level 3 enrolled in certificates and diplomas at level 3 or above (34.1% and 32.8%, respectively). Over a third (34.6%) of Māori school leavers with NCEA Level 1 enrolled in tertiary in 2022 (23.8% in certificates and diplomas at levels 3-7), and 10.4% in certificates levels 1-2. Over a quarter (26.1%) of Māori school leavers without a qualification enrolled in tertiary in 2022; the majority (14.4%) enrolled in certificates levels 1-2, with the remaining 11.6% enrolling in certificates and diplomas at levels 3-7. This information reveals a significant variation in the participation of ākonga Māori in tertiary education based on their secondary school performance. Compared to the overall population of school leavers (59.3%), ākonga Māori are less likely to pursue higher education after completing secondary school even though they achieve and obtain secondary qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2023). This discrepancy suggests that factors beyond academic achievement influence the lower rates of tertiary education engagement among Māori school leavers.

### **2.3 Tertiary Education Inequities**

In Aotearoa, tertiary institutions aim to deliver quality education tailored to the diverse needs of their ākonga population, including those of Indigenous backgrounds (Ministry of Education, 2024; Whiteford et al., 2013). Despite these efforts, achieving equal educational outcomes remains a challenge for ākonga Māori, who experience the highest withdrawal rates and

lowest participation and success rates across their courses and programmes at university (Airini et al., 2010; Bishop, 2023; Curtis et al., 2012, 2015; Madjar et al., 2010).

Research highlights the persistent inequities in academic achievement and access to tertiary education for ākonga Māori compared to their non-Māori peers (Duckworth et al., 2021; Durie, 2003; Povey et al., 2022). These disparities include socio-economic status, systemic racism and biases within educational institutions, and a lack of culturally responsive teaching practices affirming Māori identity and values (Bishop, 2023; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Ratima et al., 2022). Efforts to address these challenges have led to the implementation of policies aimed at increasing equity and promoting success for ākonga Māori, such as the Ka Hikitia strategy, which focuses on accelerating the educational success of ākonga Māori through tailored, culturally aligned approaches throughout Aotearoa education sector (Ministry of Education, 2024).

Research explaining these educational disparities ranges from individual factors such as pressures balancing work and life (Young et al., 2007) and the financial strains of academia to factors within the educational systems themselves that include a lack of mentoring and role models, cultural and social isolation, an absence of culturally responsive pedagogies (Airini et al., 2010; Curtis, Townsend, et al., 2012), and a deficiency in Indigenous-focused curriculum content (Garvey et al., 2009; Wikaire & Ratima, 2011). Several studies have also shown that retention of ākonga Māori in tertiary education is also impacted by their sense of comfort and support in their cultural identity, with several Aotearoa-based studies emphasising that ākonga retention is enhanced when pouako are actively involved in their ākonga learning communities (Zepke & Leach, 2005). Furthermore, the retention and academic success of minority ākonga improves when the course content, teaching methods, and assessments are reflective of the ākonga diverse backgrounds (Zepke & Leach, 2005).

## **2.4 Bridging and Foundation Programmes**

To address such aforementioned inequities, tertiary institutions have taken proactive steps by implementing bridging or foundation programmes that aim to enhance access and performance equity in higher education environments (Anderson et al., 2024; Curtis et al., 2017; Trewartha, 2008). These programmes often serve as alternative entry routes into higher education and are increasingly utilised in the realm of health professional education (Alexander et al., 2005; Anderson et al., 2024; Curtis, 2016). Their primary aim is to foster the development of a health workforce that includes Indigenous and ethnic minority groups or those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds (Alexander et al., 2005; Burch et al., 2013; Curtis & Reid, 2013). Such programmes align with tertiary institutions' social accountability and fairness goals while also addressing disparities in secondary education outcomes faced by marginalised communities and contributing to the broader objective of expanding access to higher education (Whiteford et al., 2013).

While often referred to interchangeably, Bridging and Foundation programmes encompass a range of definitions that sometimes overlap (Curtis, 2016). The primary goal of these programmes is to enhance the knowledge and skills of individuals, empowering them to pursue tertiary education successfully (Anderson et al., 2024). Recent shifts in the perception of these programmes highlight their contribution not just in facilitating access to higher education but also in ensuring effective transition and participation in subsequent educational or professional settings (Andersen et al., 2007; Bryers et al., 2021; Curtis, 2016). They are increasingly seen as platforms for developing critical thinking and independent learning skills, preparing ākonga for more advanced academic challenges (Trewartha, 2008; Boylan, 2009).

Contemporary approaches in bridging and foundation education have evolved from the earlier deficit models, which were primarily remedial by focusing on basic skills and knowledge to bring ākonga up to speed or achieve the necessary competence in subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics. Curtis et al. (2017) advocate that successful foundation programmes now focus on creating inclusive, engaging, and affirming learning environments, emphasising the quality of learning. This includes designing content to align with the diverse backgrounds of ākonga and integrating non-Western perspectives, languages, and values into the curriculum (Bishop, 2023; Hoskins & Jones, 2022; Malnarich, 2005; Zepke & Leach, 2005a; Curtis et al., 2017).

The effectiveness of bridging and foundation programmes, particularly in terms of their impact on the success of Indigenous and ethnic minority ākonga in tertiary education, has not been widely researched (Airini et al., 2011; Curtis et al., 2012). In Aotearoa, such programmes are increasingly deployed to enhance the academic readiness of Māori ākonga aspiring to join health professional studies. These ākonga often face challenges due to insufficient secondary school achievements or lack of required subject knowledge for direct admission, providing an alternative pathway to tertiary study that strengthens ākonga skills and abilities in a supportive and culturally safe environment (Anderson et al., 2024; Curtis, Reid, et al., 2014; Curtis, Townsend, et al., 2012).

## **2.5 Academic Writing**

Writing is an essential part of being a university ākonga. Strongman (2013) explains that writing is about communicating in words, and academic writing is about choosing words carefully to communicate complex ideas to a range of readers and audiences. Fang (2021) simply articulates academic writing as writing for academic purposes. He explains that it is

about entering into a conversation with others (Graff & Birkenstein, 2018), but the construction of your conversation is different to how you would construct your conversations for everyday social interactions with friends and family members. Several authors highlight that academic writing is multifaceted and adaptable rather than being confined to one specific format or style (Rankins-Robertson et al., 2010; Murray & Moore, 2006; Paltridge, 2004; Roald et al., 2021; Hocking & Fieldhouse, 2011). In academic settings, ākongā engage in writing for a multitude of purposes. They produce reading responses, essays, technical reports, research articles, literature reviews, lab reports, PowerPoint presentations, commentaries, book reviews, blogs, emails, and other types of written assessments. Each form of academic writing is characterised by its specific purpose, organisational structure, and linguistic features.

For this study, academic writing is defined as a formal style of communication that is pivotal in disseminating knowledge and facilitating scholarly discourse. It is characterised by structured arguments, precise language, and adherence to rigorous standards of evidence and citation (Strongman, 2013; Rankins-Robertson et al., 2010; Murray & Moore, 2006; Fang, 2021). Engaging in academic writing offers numerous benefits to tertiary ākongā. Firstly, it hones critical thinking and analytical skills, as ākongā must evaluate sources, synthesise information, and develop coherent arguments (Marshall & Rowland, 2006). Additionally, academic writing enhances research skills, teaching ākongā how to navigate academic literature and discern the quality of sources (Badke, 2021; Cottrell, 2019). These processes are invaluable in forming a well-rounded scholar capable of contributing to academic discourse. Excelling in academic writing is crucial for several reasons. Academic success is closely tied to one's ability to communicate ideas effectively through writing. Menz (2020) noted that developing strong writing skills is a marker of academic achievement and a

fundamental employability skill that is highly valued across professions. Moreover, in the diverse and collaborative academic environment context of Aotearoa, proficient academic writing enables ākonga to contribute meaningfully to the rich tapestry of global scholarship, offering local perspectives to global discussions (Marshall & Rowland, 2006).

## **2.6 Academic Writing for Māori**

Research indicates that previous achievements in secondary school significantly contribute to disparities in university academic outcomes for ākonga Māori (Johnson & Nock, 2016; Madjar et al., 2010; Ministry of Education, 2021), and over the last twenty years, there has been a growing concern among educators in Aotearoa regarding the widening gap in writing achievements among ākonga in English-medium schools (Hood & Hughson, 2022; Ministry of Education). A recent study by Medina & McGregor (2019) revealed that Pākehā and Asian ākonga achieve higher scores in reading and writing compared to ākonga Māori (Medina & McGregor, 2019), further emphasising the disparities between Māori and non-Māori groups. This inequity highlights the need for further research examining how Māori perform in academic writing at the tertiary level.

For many ākonga Māori, navigating the writing requirements within tertiary education proves to be a formidable challenge. Existing literature raises concerns that the current pedagogical methods for teaching writing may not align well with the learning preferences or engage ākonga Māori effectively (Hood & Hughson, 2022; Pukepuke & Kingi, 2019). Montgomery and Rubin (2022) also point out that the predominance of Pākehā educators in the teaching workforce in Aotearoa might be a contributing factor to the cultural discord in teaching methodologies, bringing to light the importance of culturally responsive pedagogies and the cultivation of meaningful pouako-ākonga relationships. Several studies have demonstrated

that these elements are essential for enhancing the educational outcomes of ākonga Māori and the pressing need for an educational paradigm that embraces cultural inclusivity and relevance. (Bishop, 2023; Bishop et al., 2001; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; MacFarlane, 2004).

With little change to educational inequities over the past decade, this research aims to bring this kaupapa back to the forefront, shed light on the persistent educational disparities, and advocate for more effective and culturally aligned teaching practices.

Writing is a complex task involving beginning, progressing, and completing various challenging activities for ākonga (Fang, 2021). It demands activating a wide range of skills and orientations, which may be needed at different times or simultaneously. Studies highlighting ākonga difficulties with the transition to writing in tertiary education, study skills, academic socialisation, or academic literacy are well documented (Elliott et al., 2019; Behrens et al., 2016; Itua et al., 2014). Several studies have shown that ākonga lack confidence and understanding when it comes to academic reading and writing (Itua et al., 2014) and often feel unprepared for academic writing, experiencing frustration and anxiety due to the perceived complexity and high standards required (Roald et al., 2021). Early research by Lea and Street (1998) and Lumsden et al. (2010) documented the mismatch between the academic skills ākonga develop before university and those deemed essential for success in tertiary education, suggesting that universities need to better align their academic expectations with ākonga prior experiences and provide additional guidance on essential academic skills and resources to support a smoother transition from secondary to tertiary education. Such disparities include a lack of familiarity with library resources, inadequate exposure to efficient online research strategies, a tendency to depend on revision guides and model answers, and an expectation for ongoing formative feedback (Lumsden et al., 2010).

## 2.7 Teaching and Learning

Despite its complexities, writing can be manageable and rewarding with the right approach (Fang, 2021). Effective pedagogical strategies are crucial in supporting ākonga Māori in academic writing. Ratima et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices incorporating Māori perspectives and knowledge systems into the academic curriculum. Berryman et al. (2018) further advocate for relational pedagogical approaches that build on the relational dynamics inherent in Māori culture, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The association between culturally responsive teaching approaches and the academic success of ākonga Māori is well substantiated by recent research. Studies show that fostering positive relationships between pouako and ākonga Māori enhances academic performance, confidence, and motivation to learn (Berryman et al., 2018; Bishop, 2023; Bishop et al., 2007; Earle, 2008; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009; Ratima et al., 2022; Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009). Additionally, evidence links a strong Māori cultural identity in ākonga with academic achievement (Addis et al., 2011; Bishop, 2023; Bishop et al., 2007; May 2009; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2011; Ratima et al., 2022).

Culturally responsive pedagogy has emerged as a pivotal framework for enhancing educational outcomes among ākonga Māori, recognising the importance of integrating Māori cultural values, traditions, and language into the learning environment. This approach is grounded in the principle that educational content and teaching methods should be relevant to the ākonga own cultural contexts, thereby fostering a deeper engagement and connection with their learning. Hynds et al. (2014) showed that culturally responsive pedagogies not only uplift ākonga Māori sense of belonging and identity within the school setting but also

significantly contribute to improved academic achievement and retention rates. Bishop (2023) highlights the significance of establishing a classroom environment where ākonga Māori see their identity, language, and culture as valued assets rather than barriers to academic success.

One of the most compelling demonstrations of culturally responsive pedagogy in action is the *Te Kotahitanga* research and professional development programme (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop & Berryman, 2006). Grounded in a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, the programme emphasised the centrality of pouako-ākonga relationships built on ākonga Māori cultural identities, whanaungatanga, and high expectations. Pouako were supported to implement the Effective Teaching Profile (ETP), which encouraged discursive, interactive teaching approaches, rejected deficit theorising, and positioned ākonga Māori as capable and agentic ākonga. The programme drew heavily on ākonga voice, ensuring that the lived experiences and perspectives of ākonga Māori shaped classroom practice. As a result, schools involved in *Te Kotahitanga* saw measurable improvements in ākonga Māori educational outcomes, including higher levels of engagement, stronger pouako-ākonga relationships, and increased NCEA achievement rates when compared to non-participating schools. These findings provide powerful empirical support for the claim that culturally responsive teaching not only affirms Māori identity but also improves academic success for all ākonga when effectively implemented.

Culturally responsive teaching practices include the use of Māori cultural references in curriculum content, the incorporation of te reo Māori (the Māori language), and the application of teaching methodologies that align with Māori communal and cooperative learning preferences. A key component of this pedagogical approach is the pouako role as a facilitator of learning and their ability to build strong relationships with ākonga based on

mutual respect and understanding. This emphasises the need for educators to undergo professional development that equips them with the knowledge and skills to implement culturally responsive practices effectively. Culturally responsive pedagogy represents a transformative approach to education that requires systemic support and sustained commitment to realise its full potential in bridging the educational disparities ākongā Māori face.

## **2.8 Whakapapa**

Whakapapa, a foundational concept of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge), is often translated as genealogy but encompasses much more than familial lineage (Ratima et al., 2022). It represents the intricate web of connections between individuals across generations and their links to material and spiritual realms. This holistic view of relationships through time and space underpins the idea that effective teaching must address personal and sociocultural dimensions, particularly in writing (Gardner, 2018). For pouako to truly understand their ākongā Māori whakapapa, they must delve into the cultural experiences and prior knowledge that shape their identities. By inviting ākongā Māori to share their experiences and perspectives, pouako can gain insights into their worldviews and foster a more inclusive and empathetic classroom environment (Cook-Sather, 2002).

Understanding and embracing one's own whakapapa is equally important for pouako. Montgomery and Rubin (2022) argue that when pouako reflect on their own knowledge, beliefs, values, and attitudes towards writing, they can better connect with their ākongā Māori. This reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship, known as ako, is crucial in developing a community of writers (Keown et al., 2005). It emphasises the importance of collaborative classroom learning built on strong cultural relationships. However, building these

relationships alone is insufficient. According to Alton-Lee (2003), effective instructional practice also requires a blend of cognitive and sociocultural dimensions. In the context of writing instruction, this means integrating knowledge of ākongā with a deep understanding of the writing process (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007). Instead of focusing solely on the final written product, such as an essay or report, writing instruction should emphasise the writing process. This approach is crucial for helping early ākongā develop their writing skills, fostering a sense of identity and ownership as writers.

Practitioners dedicated to a culturally responsive approach are keenly aware of the whakapapa of their ākongā and themselves. This awareness is crucial as it influences how individuals perceive themselves as writers, how their communities value writing, and what they consider important as writers and community members (Montgomery & Rubin, 2022). Whakapapa emphasises the interconnectedness of these aspects, highlighting both individuality and collective identity. Pouako who nurture and respect each ākongā Māori spiritual qualities, such as their mauri, tapu, and mana, can support the holistic development of the ākongā Māori (Collins, 2019). Thus, a culturally responsive approach to teaching writing allows ākongā Māori to bring their full selves to their learning and fosters the growth of their identities as writers.

## **2.9 Manaakitanga**

Manaakitanga, an integral concept in Māori culture, represents the ethic of care, reciprocity, and hospitality (Harris et al., 2016). In the context of education, manaakitanga encourages pouako to foster environments that uplift and affirm the mana, or inherent dignity, of each ākongā. According to Ratima et al. (2022), the term combines 'mana' with 'āki' (urging,

encouragement), highlighting the importance of encouraging and empowering others. This culturally grounded approach not only promotes a supportive and respectful learning atmosphere but also intertwines with other key Māori values such as whanaungatanga (relationships), kotahitanga (unity), and rangatiratanga (ākonga agency and leadership) (Ratima et al., 2022). The application of manaakitanga in educational settings is a key aspect of culturally responsive teaching and learning, challenging pouako to cultivate a community of care and ensuring all ākonga feel valued and included.

Ratima et al. (2022) argue for practical steps pouako can take to implement manaakitanga in the classroom, beginning with creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. Whakatūwheratia te kūaha (open the door) urges pouako to embrace diverse worldviews and teaching methods, establishing a sense of belonging from the first encounter, often through a mihi whakatau (welcome ceremony). Understanding ākonga whakapapa and cultural backgrounds is essential for fostering whanaungatanga (relationships). Additionally, Ratima et al. (2022) highlight the notion of nourishing the body to support the mind: *kai mā te puku, kai mō te hinengaro* – emphasising the importance of shared meals in building relationships and unity, particularly through cultural customs like karakia mō te kai (blessing of the food). Empathy and humility are vital to practising manaakitanga, with Aroha ki te tangata (caring for others) involving empathetic and supportive communication. Simple gestures, such as starting a class with positive affirmations or supporting ākonga difficulties, greatly impact their learning experience. Being he tangata māhaki (a humble person) allows pouako to value each ākonga contributions, fostering respect and empowerment. Manaakitanga also involves whakamana i te tangata (enhancing mana of others), which is crucial for affirming ākonga

unique identities and strengths, setting high expectations, and using culturally affirming practices to support both academic success and personal growth.

Manaakitanga plays a crucial role in supporting the teaching and learning of developing writers in Aotearoa. Montgomery and Rubin (2022) explain that the whakataukī "Manaaki te katoa" emphasises nurturing a supportive and respectful educational environment. Embracing manaakitanga and fostering learning partnerships is essential for ākonga to develop the skills and mindset needed for lifelong learning, self-awareness, and responsible actions and decisions. This approach enhances ākonga agency and encourages active engagement from all writers (Davis, 2019; Fletcher, 2006). Ensuring ākonga well-being is paramount for them to reach their full potential (Ratima et al., 2022). By fostering positive, culturally informed interactions, pouako can make all writers feel valued and confident in their writing abilities.

## **2.10 Whakawhanaungatanga**

Many studies in Aotearoa education have advocated for relational pedagogical approaches that emphasise the importance of building strong, positive relationships between educators and ākonga (Baxter et al., 2015; Bishop et al., 2009; Bishop, 2023; Curtis et al., 2012; Rawlings & Wilson, 2013; Tomoana, 2012; Waiari et al., 2021). Whakawhanaungatanga is a well-known approach described as a process of establishing relationships and the quality of the established relationships (Bishop, 2023; Bishop et al., 2007). Whakawhanaungatanga is a foundational element that brings people together around a common cause and association, such as whakapapa, connections to places, interests or shared learning experiences (Macfarlane & Derby, 2022). For ākonga Māori, authentic, meaningful, and reciprocal relationships are important (Macfarlane, 2004; Macfarlane & Derby, 2022; Tomoana,

2012). Many studies show that when ākonga feel a sense of belonging, they also embrace a heightened sense of responsibility towards themselves, their peers, and their educators (Tomoana, 2012; Curtis et al., 2012; Baxter et al., 2015; Waiari et al., 2021). Research also indicates that fostering positive relationships between pouako and ākonga Māori enhances the ākonga academic performance, confidence, and motivation to learn (Bishop, 2023; Bishop & Berryman, 2014; Hawk et al., 2001; LeGrice et al., 2017; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009; Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009; White et al., 2009).

Whakawhanaungatanga also aligns with culturally responsive teaching practices as it acknowledges and values the cultural backgrounds of ākonga, fostering a learning environment where ākonga feel respected and connected (Bishop, 2023; Bishop & Berryman, 2014). Macfarlane and Derby (2022) recommend that educators take the opportunity to begin their semester with a mihi whakatau (welcome ceremony) as a platform for building a meaningful relationship with their ākonga. They highlight that a formal welcome indicates to ākonga a commitment to learning, growing, and working together. Tomoana (2012) highlighted that Māori tertiary participants also supported these ideas and emphasised the importance of building strong, authentic relationships with ākonga from the outset. Tomoana also suggests that educators should get to know who their ākonga are, where they come from, what their goals and passions are, and speak honestly about how the pouako can help them achieve their goals.

The ability of pouako to establish meaningful, respectful and trusting relationships with ākonga Māori is critical to academic engagement and success (Berryman et al., 2018). As illustrated by Bishop and Berryman (2006), the nature and quality of classroom interactions can shape learning contexts that provide a safe space for young Māori to bring all aspects of who they are to the classroom. To invite ākonga Māori to be themselves, educators must be

responsive to the ways all ākonga make sense of their world (Bishop, 2023; Bishop & Berryman, 2006). An authentic and effective writing practitioner must genuinely know their ākonga before knowing them as developing writers. Writing and the teaching of writing offer a means of connecting people – a way to explore and strengthen ākonga sense of whakapapa.

### **2.11 Māori Identity**

For Māori, aspects such as identity, language (te reo Māori), and customs and traditions (tikanga Māori) are holistic and hold significant importance in both personal life and educational experiences (Webber & MacFarlane, 2020). Evidence suggests that the educational outcomes for ākonga Māori are significantly improved when these cultural elements are respected and seamlessly incorporated into their learning environment, becoming a regular part of their daily educational experience (Ratima et al., 2022). Esteemed Māori educationalists, including Bishop (2023), Bishop and Berryman (2006), Durie (2003), and Macfarlane (2018), have supported this perspective, reinforcing the value of integrating Māori culture into the education system. Durie (2003) further elaborates that failing to recognise and incorporate Māori identity, language, and customs within the educational system constitutes a disservice to ākonga Māori. By acknowledging and promoting ākonga Māori cultural identities, educators and providers play a crucial role in facilitating their success as Māori.

### **2.12 Learning Environment**

A culturally safe learning environment in tertiary education is one that is inclusive, recognising and valuing the cultural backgrounds of all ākonga. Research tells us that it involves creating a learning space where ākonga feel respected, valued, and free to express their cultural identities (Fonua, 2020; Curtis et al., 2012). Ensuring safe and inclusive environments within

tertiary education institutions is crucial for the academic success and well-being of ākongā Māori. However, studies have shown that ākongā Māori in tertiary health education continues to encounter negative experiences, including both explicit and implicit racism from their peers and staff members (Cormack et al., 2024; Smith et al., 2022; Wikaire et al., 2017; Curtis et al., 2014; Garvey et al., 2009). This point highlights the persistent challenge of racism faced by ākongā Māori in tertiary health education settings and that these learning settings do not guarantee a culturally safe or positive educational experience for ākongā Māori. It emphasises the importance for tertiary institutions to implement systemic reforms to eliminate discriminatory practices and foster an inclusive environment for all ākongā (Cormack et al., 2024; Mayeda et al., 2014).

### **2.13 Teaching Writing in the Artificial Intelligence Era**

The landscape of writing instruction has undergone a significant transformation with the advent of advanced digital tools, shifting traditional pen-and-paper methods toward more innovative and dynamic pedagogical practices (Haleem et al., 2022). Virtual classrooms, online workshops, and cloud-based writing tools are at the forefront of this revolution, offering real-time feedback, collaborative editing, and plagiarism checks (Garlinska et al., 2023). These platforms can enhance writing, critical thinking and independent reasoning skills (Nykyropets, 2023). AI-driven platforms also provide tailored learning experiences by identifying individual writing strengths and weaknesses, enabling educators to adapt their teaching strategies to meet each ākongā unique needs better, leading to improved learning outcomes (Dogan et al., 2023). Cahyono et al. (2023) further explores the impact of mobile technology in writing instruction, noting that it empowers ākongā to publish their work

publicly and engage in peer reviews, boosting their confidence and writing abilities while cultivating a sense of community and collaborative learning (Umamah & Cahyono, 2022). However, the integration of AI writing tools is not without its challenges. While tools such as Grammarly, QuillBot, Wordtune, and Jenni provide advanced functionalities that aid in grammar correction, paraphrasing, and stylistic improvements, over-dependence on these tools can impede the natural development of writing skills and critical thinking (Iskender, 2023). Critics argue that ākonga might lean too heavily on AI for corrections, thus failing to engage deeply with their mistakes and learn from them. Additionally, educators like Johninke et al. (2023) express concerns that AI tools might limit ākonga creativity by offering pre-generated suggestions. Farrokhnia et al. (2023) highlight that while AI tools can assist with basic writing skills, they fail to address complex writing elements such as argument structure and coherence, which require higher-order thinking. Issues of digital equity also persist, as not all ākonga have access to the necessary technology, potentially exacerbating educational inequalities (Mozumder et al., 2023). Therefore, while AI writing tools offer substantial benefits, it is crucial for educators to integrate these tools thoughtfully, ensuring they complement rather than replace fundamental learning processes.

#### **2.14 Summary of Literature Review**

This literature review addresses the long-standing concern regarding the academic writing success of ākonga Māori at the tertiary level, emphasising the lack of extensive recent research in this area. It explores themes such as the educational landscape, challenges and opportunities related to academic writing, and teaching strategies to enhance writing proficiency. Historical analyses reveal systemic challenges and disparities in academic achievement for ākonga Māori rooted in colonisation practices. Despite some gains in NCEA

attainment, persistent inequities limit tertiary education opportunities for ākongā Māori. Academic writing poses significant challenges due to misalignment with their learning preferences, highlighting the need for culturally responsive pedagogies and meaningful pouako-ākongā relationships. Effective strategies include integrating Māori perspectives and knowledge systems into the curriculum and fostering positive relationships. Principles like whanaungatanga, whakapapa and manaakitanga are crucial for holistic development.

Despite the existing research on broader educational inequities, gaps persist in understanding the specific factors that support or hinder ākongā Māori in academic writing. This review emphasises the need for further research on the ākongā perspectives, culturally responsive teaching practices, the effectiveness of bridging and foundation programmes, and the integration of AI tools in writing instruction. This research directly addresses these gaps by foregrounding the lived experiences of both ākongā and pouako Māori, exploring what works in the development of academic writing capabilities in a foundation-level context. Through a Kaupapa Māori approach, it generates specific culturally responsive teaching strategies and elevates Māori voices within writing pedagogy, which remain underrepresented in the current literature. Addressing these areas will provide a deeper understanding of what success in academic writing looks like for ākongā Māori and how inclusive teaching and learning practices can support their academic achievement. This research aims to fill some of the gaps identified in this literature.

# Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the design and methods used in this study. It will begin by providing an overview of the study's aims, objectives, and research question and discussing the researcher's positioning. This will be followed by an in-depth description of the methodology, data collection and data analysis methods used to conduct this research.

## 3.2 Research Aims and Objectives

This study aimed to improve teaching practices and ākongā Māori experiences of and access to effective academic writing skills courses by:

1. Developing an understanding of ākongā Māori experiences of foundation-level academic writing skills courses.
2. Developing an understanding of pouako experiences of delivering academic writing skills in foundation-level studies.
3. Examining ākongā Māori and pouako perceptions of the issues impacting ākongā Māori academic writing skills.
4. Identifying ākongā Māori and pouako needs and aspirations for academic writing skills courses.
5. Identifying what works for ākongā Māori in academic writing skills development.

### **3.3 Research Question**

The key research question for this thesis is:

- What are the key factors that contribute to effective academic writing skills teaching and learning practices for ākonga Māori in foundation courses/programmes?

### **3.4 The Positioning of the Researcher**

Acknowledging the significance of our theoretical positioning is crucial. Walter and Anderson (2013) define methodology as the theoretical perspective or framework that informs research understanding, design, and implementation. They argue that a researcher's social, economic, and cultural background significantly shapes their worldview and is a key factor in a study's methodology. Our social positioning heavily influences the way we interpret and understand the world. This highlights that our social status affects the questions we choose to investigate, the conclusions we reach, and the theoretical frameworks we find most compelling.

As a Māori researcher embedded within the educational context of this study, I occupy an insider position. Insider researchers are those who are part of the community being researched and bring with them shared lived experiences, values, and relationships (Smith, 1999; Smyth & Holian, 1998). Within a Kaupapa Māori framework, this positioning is legitimate and often essential. Kaupapa Māori research is developed by Māori, for Māori, and with Māori, placing value on researchers who are accountable to their communities and who work to uplift Māori aspirations (Irwin, 1994; Smith, 1999). Rewi (2014) further explains that insider and outsider positions are not fixed binaries but are fluid, relational, and constantly negotiated throughout the research process. While being an insider enables deeper access and cultural alignment and strengthens whanaungatanga, it also carries unique

responsibilities and ethical expectations. These include maintaining cultural integrity and reflexivity and ensuring that the research is tika—conducted in ways that honour the mana and aspirations of the community (Smith, 1999).

For this study, my perspective is shaped by my identity as a Māori male born in Kirikiriroa to a Māori father and Pākehā and Māori mother. On my father's side, I whakapapa to Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Wairere, Ngāti Whawhakia, and Ngāti Mahuta with a strong connection to my hapū and iwi. On my mother's side, I whakapapa to Ngā Puhī and Ingarangi (England). I have an educational background in adult education with 20 years of experience working with ākonga Māori, and I currently work with foundation ākonga Māori at Waipapa Taumata Rau.

This research is approached from a Kaupapa Māori perspective, as my worldview is uniquely and unapologetically grounded in this framework. My upbringing within my Māori whānau has provided me with lived experiences that fuel my desire for my whānau, hapū, iwi, and all Māori people to thrive in education. As an educator, Kaupapa Māori enables me to critically evaluate the teaching and learning environment and its impact on improving Māori success. As an emerging researcher, working within a Kaupapa Māori research paradigm allows me to hone my theoretical knowledge and practical skills, ensuring the effective conduct of this study.

### **3.5 Methodology**

Qualitative research methods grounded in Kaupapa Māori theory were used to gain an in-depth understanding of ākonga Māori and pouako experiences of academic writing skills to contribute to the development and practices of academic writing skills that are better suited to the needs and aspirations of ākonga Māori in foundation courses/programmes.

### **3.5.1 Kaupapa Māori Theory**

Kaupapa Māori Theory is a research framework that supports and validates Māori aspirations and principles. According to L. Smith (1997) and Nepe (1991), it encompasses Māori knowledge within a context that recognises and legitimises Māori language, culture, values, and knowledge. Kaupapa Māori Theory is rooted in Te Ao Māori (the Māori worldview), offering a unique Māori perspective for conceptualising, understanding, engaging with, and interpreting the world (Nepe, 1991; Pihama, 2001; L. Smith, 1997). Pihama (2010) explains that Kaupapa Māori Theory must remain flexible and continuously evolving to effectively address changing circumstances and the diverse needs of Māori people. This adaptability is essential in an era where Māori communities continue to confront and resist the impacts of colonisation (Smith, 2011).

Despite a plethora of studies exploring the number of ways that Kaupapa Māori has been conceptualised and utilised in research (Smith, 2021; Pihama et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2012), no concise definition has been provided in the literature (Smith, 2011; Pihama et al., 2015). Attempting to define Kaupapa Māori Theory narrowly contradicts its inherent flexibility and reduces its broad applicability. Therefore, defining Kaupapa Māori Theory should avoid imposing strict boundaries on its research framework. Instead, it should be understood as a dynamic approach that engages with the diverse and complex realities of Māori communities, making it relevant and adaptable to various contexts within contemporary Aotearoa (Mahuika, 2008; Smith, 2011).

### **3.5.2 The Development of Kaupapa Māori Theory**

Kaupapa Māori Theory emerged from within the broader cultural revitalisation movement developed in Aotearoa following the post-World War Two period (Smith, 1997; Smith, 1997; Bishop, 1999). This movement gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s, driven by a growing political awareness within Māori communities. This revitalisation privileged Māori cultural aspirations, preferences, and practices, challenging and resisting traditional research dominant hegemonic discourses. G. Smith (1997) states that "Kaupapa Māori questions the right of Pākehā to dominate and exclude Māori preferred interests in education and asserts the validity of Māori knowledge, language, custom, and practice, and its right to continue to flourish in the land of its origin, as the Tangata Whenua (Indigenous)" (p.273). This shift provided a space for Māori issues, concerns, ways of knowing and understanding, and practice to be placed at the centre of the research enterprise rather than on the fringes (Carlson et al., 2017).

### **3.5.3 Kaupapa Māori Theory Movement**

In academia, Kaupapa Māori Theory emerged as a response to achieve tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and mana motuhake (authority/self-governance) for Māori (G. Smith, 1997; Walker, 1996). One prominent example of this theory in action is the Kura Kaupapa Māori movement, which exemplifies the revitalisation of te reo Māori (the Māori language) through an education system grounded in Māori philosophies (G. Smith, 1997; Smith, 2012). These initiatives demonstrate how Kaupapa Māori Theory contributes to the resistance against colonisation by promoting Māori-centered education that preserves and enhances Māori culture and language (Smith et al., 2012). This resistance is deeply rooted in the legacy

of Māori tūpuna (ancestors) and continues to challenge Western hegemony across various spheres (Pihama, 2001).

Barnes (2006), Borell (2014), and Smith (2012) argue that research continues to be a key factor in the ongoing process of colonisation. They explain how research establishes the validity of certain knowledge systems by prioritising those of the dominant group, often resulting in the marginalisation or complete disregard of the knowledge and perspectives of other groups. Smith (2012) and Walker (1996) explain that the dominance of Western ideology, culture, history, and philosophies in academic research traditions have often led to the marginalisation of Māori culture, knowledge systems and te reo Māori, which are frequently ignored, misrepresented, or devalued within academic settings. This systematic exclusion reflects the bias against non-Western academic perspectives, highlighting the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous knowledge systems in gaining recognition and respect within the predominantly Western academic landscape.

In the late 1980s, Māori increasingly sought to safeguard their culture and knowledge from further oppression (Walker, 1996). This period, known as the Māori Renaissance, emphasised the importance of stopping exploitative and harmful research on Māori to prevent the misuse of their knowledge (Smith, 2012). This movement inspired Māori to establish a presence in academia, oversee the creation of knowledge to benefit their community and affirm their self-determination (tino rangatiratanga) as the Indigenous people (Tangata Whenua) of Aotearoa (Smith et al., 2012; Smith, 2012).

### 3.5.4 Kaupapa Māori Principles

Originally, G. Smith (1997) provided several key principles of Kaupapa Māori, a theoretical framework that guides Māori-centered initiatives and research. These principles are deeply rooted in Māori epistemology and values, emphasising the importance of Māori self-determination and methodologies in education and beyond. The following descriptions form part of the original key principles as stated by G. Smith (1997):

- **Tino Rangatiratanga (Self-Determination):** This principle is about the right of Māori to control their destiny and make decisions about their own lives, lands, and resources. It emphasises autonomy and leadership from a Māori perspective, seeking to empower Māori communities to govern themselves according to their values and systems.
- **Taonga Tuku Iho (Cultural Aspirations):** This principle refers to treasures such as the Māori language, customs, and knowledge, which have been handed down from ancestors. This principle highlights the importance of preserving and nurturing these treasures, recognising them as foundational to Māori identity and well-being. It encourages the integration of these cultural assets into all aspects of life and learning.
- **Ako Māori (Culturally Preferred Pedagogy):** This principle centres on a Māori approach to teaching and learning, which is reciprocal and relational. It respects the diverse ways in which ākonga Māori gain knowledge, emphasising the role of the community, storytelling, and connection to the environment in the educational process. This approach challenges mainstream educational practices, advocating for methods that resonate with Māori cultural values.

- **Kia Piki Ake I Ngā Raruraru o Te Kainga (Socio-Economic Mediation):** This principle is about creating tailored solutions to improve the overall well-being of Māori communities by addressing their specific socio-economic challenges. It involves developing strategies and interventions to enhance social, economic, and health outcomes for Māori, grounded in a deep understanding of the unique circumstances and needs of Māori whānau and communities.
- **Whānau (Extended Family Structure):** This principle is about recognising the central role of the extended family in Māori society. It values the collective over the individual, emphasising the importance of kinship ties, shared responsibilities, and mutual support. It seeks to strengthen these social structures as a foundation for Māori development and well-being.
- **Kaupapa (Collective Purpose):** This principle refers to the collective vision or philosophy that underpins Māori initiatives. It involves a shared commitment to Māori values and principles, guiding the direction and purpose of collective efforts. This principle emphasises unity, purpose, and the importance of aligning actions with Māori worldviews and aspirations.

Together, these principles form the backbone of Kaupapa Māori theory and practice, offering a framework for action that is culturally grounded, community-focused, and aimed at achieving positive outcomes for Māori people. They guide research, education, and various initiatives within Māori communities, ensuring these efforts are rooted in Māori epistemologies and methodologies.

Although Kaupapa Māori Theory is currently recognised within academic settings, its epistemological foundations are deeply rooted in a long-established theoretical tradition that predates the arrival of Europeans in Aotearoa (Nepe, 1991; Pihama, 2001, 2005, 2010). Historically, Māori have consistently engaged in theoretical exploration, developing a unique body of knowledge that has been transmitted across generations. This corpus of knowledge has been continuously shaped and refined by Māori scholars and practitioners over time (Cochrane et al., 2008).

To fully understand Kaupapa Māori Theory, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge), Tikanga Māori (Māori cultural customs and practices), and Te Ao Māori (the Māori worldview). These elements are essential to the foundation of Kaupapa Māori Theory. For researchers to authentically investigate and address issues affecting Māori, their theoretical approach must be from a Māori worldview. Pihama (2010) emphasises that using this Indigenous framework is crucial for genuine and relevant research concerning Māori communities.

### **3.5.5 Kaupapa Māori Research Methodology**

Kaupapa Māori Theory has shaped and influenced this study, drawing on the principles and practices established by prominent scholars such as Graham Smith (1997), Linda Smith (1997, 2012, 2021), and Leonie Pihama (2001, 2010, 2014). This section outlines key aspects of this methodology and its integration into the research. Additionally, this methodology guided the design of the focus groups and interview methods, which are detailed later in this chapter.

### **3.5.6 Kaupapa Māori is Positioned within a Māori Worldview**

Kaupapa Māori privileges and validates Māori perspectives, knowledge, practices, and ways of understanding the world (Pihama, 2001). In Kaupapa Māori research, the Māori worldview is accepted as the norm, rejecting the Western notion of Māori as the other (Smith, 2012). This research explored the experiences of Māori learning about academic writing, aiming to present a perspective that genuinely reflects their realities. Māori cultural practices and processes were used throughout the research process and formed the foundation for engagement (G. Smith, 1997). For instance, Māori tikanga such as karakia (prayer), whakawhānaungatanga (building relationships), and manaakitanga (showing respect, generosity and care for others) were incorporated into the research.

### **3.5.7 Kaupapa Māori is Controlled and Governed by Māori**

Kaupapa Māori is inherently controlled and governed by Māori people, highlighting power and authority on Māori knowledge and practices (Bishop, 2005). Rooted in the principles of tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and mana motuhake (authority/self-governance), it emphasises that Kaupapa Māori research is by Māori, for Māori, with Māori, and about Māori. Walker (1996) argues that rangatiratanga embodies the concept of mana, signifying the ability to retain what belongs to Māori and the freedom to manage and regulate it according to their own decisions. Throughout the research process, a Kaupapa Māori research approach was used, ensuring that ākonga Māori and pouako were given the power to share their experiences and perceptions about what they felt was important and relevant for Māori (Smith, 2012).

From the outset of this research to the dissemination of its findings, Māori have retained control over the design, development, execution, and decision-making processes of the project. This control is evident in three key areas: a Māori researcher oversaw the entire research process, ākonga Māori led the focus group discussion, and pouako Māori directed the interview process. This highlights that Māori participation has been integral at multiple levels, situating their perspectives and authority at the core of this research. Focus group participants are former ākonga Māori of the Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences, situated within Te Kupenga Hauora Māori, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences at Waipapa Taumata Rau. Associate Professor Pania Te Maro, of Ngāti Porou and Te Whānau a Pokai, also supervised this research. She is the Associate Director Māori of Te Kura Pūkenga Tangata (College of Humanities and Social Sciences) and the Kaihautū Māori of Te Kura o te Mātauranga, Massey University.

### **3.5.8 Kaupapa Māori Acknowledges the Diversity of Māori**

Kaupapa Māori privileges and values the identity, characteristics, and lived experiences of contemporary Māori people (Smith, 2011) while acknowledging the intricate dynamics of whānau, hapū, and iwi (Pihama, 2010). This research acknowledges the diverse realities of Māori and is reflected in all processes undertaken in this study. For instance, in the ākonga focus groups, ākonga revealed their diverse origins from various hapū and iwi, each bringing unique connections and lived experiences that shaped their Māori worldview.

### **3.5.9 Kaupapa Māori Opposes Deficit-Based Analysis of Māori**

Kaupapa Māori rejects any analysis that portrays Māori as lacking or deficient. It stands firmly against cultural-deficit theories and frameworks that marginalise Māori (G. Smith, 1997).

Smith (2012) describes deficit theories as perspectives that view Māori as inadequate, deficient, and problematic. For example, blame for lower Māori education outcomes has traditionally been attributed to Māori without examining how wider social, cultural and economic factors could influence outcomes. Victim-blaming discourses are the result of colonial thinking and go against the essence of Kaupapa Māori. This research maintained a Kaupapa Māori perspective during data collection and analysis. For instance, I deliberately initiated discussions in the focus group, highlighting strengths, opportunities, and solutions. This involved asking participants to share examples of effective Māori teaching and learning methods that have positively impacted their learning, emphasising Māori perspectives and contributions to education. This method consciously shifted away from attributing blame to individuals or communities, fostering a more empowering and solution-focused discussion.

### **3.5.10 Kaupapa Māori is Transformative**

Kaupapa Māori is a critical analytical tool enabling meaningful, transformative, and positive change for Māori (Smith, 2011). It is essential to focus on transformation within Kaupapa Māori, ensuring this issue remains central as the framework continues to grow and evolve (G. Smith, 1997). This research employs Kaupapa Māori to develop effective strategies for enhancing Māori academic outcomes in academic writing. This study empowers Māori to control the narrative by sharing and revitalising knowledge through sustainable means and promoting the Māori voice.

### **3.5.11 Kaupapa Māori Theoretical Space**

Kaupapa Māori was developed to counteract suppression and revitalise Māori culture and language (G. Smith, 1997). It offers an academic theoretical framework and approach, which

consciously incorporates the challenges and underlying power dynamics faced by Māori into the analysis (Pihama, 2001). Kaupapa Māori theoretical space is not just a set of principles but also a dynamic and evolving space where Māori scholars, researchers, and communities engage in knowledge production that is meaningful, empowering, and transformative. It has been influential in various fields, including education, health, and social sciences, challenging and expanding the boundaries of conventional research to include Indigenous perspectives and methodologies (Burgess et al., 2021; Pihama, 2005; Smith, 2021; Smith et al., 2012). Being grounded in Kaupapa Māori methodology allowed participants to share and discuss their diverse experiences in a safe environment, enabling detailed and rich kōrero. This enables the findings to extend beyond a description of barriers and inhibitors of academic writing skills, offering evidence-based knowledge for educational gains and transformative best practices grounded in the needs and aspirations of ākonga Māori.

### **3.6 Methods**

This section provides a detailed description of the methods used in this study.

#### **3.6.1 Tikanga**

This research focused on privileging the worldview, perspectives, and lived experiences of Māori. Conducting such research requires respecting Māori cultural practices and norms and adhering to important tikanga protocols encompassing Māori customs and traditions. As described by Hudson et al. (2010), Tikanga involves "specific practices that aim to enhance relationships and ensure the preservation of mana (justice and equity reflected through power and authority)" (p. 2), reflecting the values, beliefs, and worldview of Māori.

Table 1 outlines the tikanga and research guidelines initially developed by Smith (2005) and extended by Cram (2001). These cultural values and guidelines acknowledge the responsibility that researchers must take to ensure that conducting research with Indigenous communities is both culturally acceptable and safe. The second column translates these values into applicable research methods (Cram, 2001).

*Table 1: Kaupapa Māori Research guidelines*

<b>Cultural values (L. Smith, 1999)</b>	<b>Research guidelines (Cram, 2001)</b>
<b>Aroha ki te tangata</b>	Respect for people. Allow people to define their own space and meet on their terms.
<b>He kanoahi kitea</b>	It is important to meet people face-to-face and be a face that is known to and seen within a community.
<b>Titiro, whakarongo... kōrero</b>	Looking and listening and then maybe speaking. Develop understanding in order to find a place from which to speak.
<b>Manaaki ki te tangata</b>	Sharing, hosting, and being generous.
<b>Kia tūpato</b>	Be cautious, politically astute, culturally safe, and reflective about insider/outsider status.
<b>Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata</b>	Do not trample on the 'mana' or dignity of a person.
<b>Kia māhaki</b>	Be humble; do not flaunt your knowledge; find ways of sharing it.

Sourced from Smith (2006)

Guided by Māori belief systems and experiences, the concepts of respect, trust, reciprocity, accountability, relational boundaries, and collective and ongoing relationships were embedded within these research guidelines, ensuring culturally appropriate and safe kōrero with Māori study participants. The key informant and focus group sections below will discuss specific processes undertaken by the researcher.

### **3.6.2 Consultation**

Consultation was integral to this research from the initial conception to the dissemination of findings. This involved engaging with both Māori and non-Māori stakeholders. Thesis

supervisors were consulted throughout this study and agreed that the nature of this study aligned with Kaupapa Māori Theory and Research. The Tumuaki (Deputy Dean – Māori) and Head of Te Kupenga Hauora Māori, and the Director of Toimaiora and the Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences programme at the Waipapa Taumata Rau were also consulted. Permission was obtained to engage with their ākonga and ensure they were comfortable with the investigation. Kaumātua at Te Kupenga Hauora Māori, Waipapa Taumata Rau, were consulted throughout the project regarding the tikanga observed, and they provided guidance at each stage when sought. Their involvement ensured that cultural practices were upheld and that the research process remained grounded in tikanga Māori. Toimaiora, a Māori Health Research Group, within Te Kupenga Hauora Māori, Waipapa Taumata Rau, also provided informal support during the research. These forms of consultation helped guide the research processes and ensured that this study remained transformative for ākonga Māori.

### **3.6.3 Data Collection**

#### **Key Informant Interviews**

Key informant interviews were selected to explore pouako Māori experiences of teaching academic writing skills to ākonga Māori and their perceptions of key issues impacting ākonga Māori in foundation-level studies. Essentially, this approach was chosen as it allows for a richer, more nuanced understanding of the research topic, contributing significantly to the depth and quality of the research findings. These insights, experiences, or perspectives are valuable because they reveal aspects of the topic that other quantitative methods of gathering data might not capture. It also provided flexibility, allowing researchers to explore complex topics in detail and adapt to new insights as they emerge during conversations.

Three key informant interviews with pouako Māori were conducted between June 2021 and August 2021 to answer the research question. Key informants were purposively selected to provide a range of perspectives and issues involved in the provision of academic writing skills to ākonga Māori in foundation courses/programmes. They included two pouako from different universities and one pouako from a polytechnic.

Key informants were recruited through existing networks. An email was sent to professional networks such as members of the Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand (FABENZ) society requesting expressions of interest (EOI) from pouako who met the inclusion criteria described below. The researcher then screened all expressions of interest to identify those who met the study criteria.

The criterion for inclusion for pouako participating in this study was:

- Experience teaching ākonga academic writing skills in pre-degree foundation certificates/programmes.

No other restrictions were placed on the inclusion criteria; however, preference was given to those pouako who whakapapa Māori and had experience teaching ākonga Māori at a university.

Four individuals responded to the EOI and were confirmed as eligible participants. The researcher then contacted these eligible participants to explain the study using an information sheet (Appendix A). At this point, potential participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Once they confirmed their interest in participating in the research, they received the participant information sheet (Appendix A) and the consent form (Appendix B).

Subsequently, the interview date, time, and location were scheduled in consultation with key informants and varied depending on individual preferences and circumstances.

Four pouako who met the inclusion criteria agreed to participate in the interviews. However, one pouako withdrew due to personal reasons, resulting in three interviews being conducted.

A semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix C) was developed and included questions on their experiences of providing academic writing skills to ākonga Māori, their understanding of issues related to the provision of academic writing skills development to ākonga Māori, their understanding of challenges facing ākonga Māori in the education system; communication with ākonga Māori; what influences their decision making about the education they provide for ākonga Māori; and contextual and organisational factors that may impact on their provision of education to ākonga Māori.

### **Focus Group Interviews**

A focus group method was selected to explore ākonga Māori experiences of academic writing skills courses and their perceptions of key issues impacting ākonga Māori in foundation-level studies. This method was chosen as it aligns with Māori values and Kaupapa Māori research principles by promoting collective engagement and participatory dialogue. Focus groups create a communal space for sharing experiences and insights, embodying the Māori value of whanaungatanga and enabling the co-creation of knowledge in a culturally respectful manner. This approach not only facilitates diverse perspectives and deepens understanding of complex cultural contexts but also empowers Māori participants by providing a culturally safe environment, supporting tino rangatiratanga and ensuring research is relevant and beneficial to Māori communities.

One focus group comprising nine ākonga Māori was conducted in June 2021. The duration of the focus group was two hours, including 30 minutes of whakawhanaungatanga and kaitahi (eating together). It was held in the dedicated ākonga study space for ākonga Māori at Te Kupenga Hauora Māori, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, Waipapa Taumata Rau, at a time agreed upon by all focus group participants.

As the study focused on the experiences of former ākonga from the Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences Programme, the inclusion criteria were restricted to:

- Ākonga, who self-identified as being of Māori ethnicity
- Ākonga, who recently graduated with a Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences certificate.

The MAPAS Student Support Advisors for the Certificate in Health Sciences programme and First-Year bachelor health degrees were consulted about this research and agreed to assist with the recruitment process. A pānui (announcement) was sent out on the ākonga learning management system requesting expressions of interest from ākonga who met the inclusion criteria.

Subsequently, the researcher screened all expressions of interest and identified those who met the study criteria. Nine individuals responded to the EOI and were confirmed as eligible participants. The researcher then contacted the eligible participants to explain the study using an information sheet (Appendix D). At this point, potential participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Once they confirmed their interest in participating in the research, they received the participant information sheet (Appendix D) and the consent form

(Appendix E). Subsequently, they were given a date, time, and location for the group interview.

During the recruitment period, nine ākonga Māori who met the inclusion criteria agreed to participate in the focus group. As a result, all nine ākonga were selected as participants for the focus group.

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed and comprised of the following open-ended discussion points (Appendix F):

- What factors support ākonga Māori success with writing for academic purposes?
- What are the challenging factors that impact ākonga Māori success with writing for academic purposes?
- What are the needs of ākonga Māori in relation to writing for academic purposes?

These discussion points were intentionally broad to allow the focus group participants the flexibility to respond in a manner that best represents their experiences. This approach allowed them to provide more comprehensive narratives and delve into aspects of their experiences that specific questions might not have directly addressed. This also allowed the facilitator to explore individual narratives while ensuring the responses could be systematically organised and analysed. The flexible nature of the focus group schedule supports the understanding that Māori is not one homogenous group; rather, Māori have different learning experiences, needs and aspirations for academic writing. This flexibility enabled ākonga to actively engage with the questions, participate fully, and contribute their perspectives. It allowed participants to direct the conversation, allowing the researcher to

delve deeper into specific areas, bypass topics that were already covered, or explore new themes that emerged during the discussion.

The focus group was designed to prioritise the comfort and safety of all participants. This involved beginning with a mihimihi (brief welcome), whakawhanaungatanga (relationship-building), and providing kai (food). Throughout the focus group interview, the facilitator was mindful of the diverse backgrounds of the ākongā and avoided making assumptions about the proceedings, remaining open to various cultural practices. The facilitator asked the ākongā for their preferences on how the focus group should be opened, closed, and conducted to ensure the process respected their cultural practices. Consequently, the focus group chose to open and close with karakia.

An essential phase at the beginning of the focus group was building rapport with the participants. This rapport fostered an environment where participants felt safe and comfortable sharing their personal stories and insights. A semi-structured schedule guided the discussion, offering a framework without strictly dictating the conversation (see Appendix F). This approach enabled the facilitator to foster interaction among group members and ensure a variety of topics were covered. It was developed based on a review of relevant literature. Data was collected through audio-recorded focus groups (ākongā) and interviews (pouako).

#### **3.6.4 Data Analysis**

Data was analysed thematically to address the study aims and objectives, give voice to participants' experiences and identify the specific enablers and constraints to learning and teaching academic writing. An inductive thematic analysis enabled the researcher to

systematically identify and organise data and extract patterns of meaning, providing a rich and detailed understanding of ākongā and pouako experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2014).

All interviews and the focus group were digitally recorded with participants' permission and transcribed verbatim. During key informant and focus group discussions, the researcher recorded verbal characteristics such as unfinished ideas, laughter, and important references to teaching and learning moments. After transcription, the data was analysed using NVivo12, a qualitative data analysis software.

Identifiable information was removed, and transcripts were assigned codes to protect participant confidentiality. The inductive approach involved multiple, disciplined readings of transcript data to identify and describe commonalities and differences in participants' experiences and ascertain a general picture of the patterns and themes that emerged from the data.

Thematic analysis is a process that involves six key steps:

1. Familiarising yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Data analysis involved organising themes into meta themes and subthemes, where related themes were grouped under broader meta themes and further specified as subthemes. This structuring process was informed by theoretical perspectives, particularly emphasising the importance of the researcher's epistemological stance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, the analysis was grounded in a Kaupapa Māori theoretical framework, reflecting the researcher's cultural and social positioning. A methodological triangulation, integrating interviews and focus groups, was employed within a Kaupapa Māori theoretical framework to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. This approach and oversight from project mentors/supervisors ensured the study's alignment with Kaupapa Māori research principles, enhancing its robustness and integrity.

### **3.6.5 Ethical Considerations**

This study was granted full ethics approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Reference No. 4000023233) (Appendix G). Consent to recruit and interview ākonga was also obtained from the Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences, Te Kupenga Hauora Māori, at Waipapa Taumata Rau (Appendix H).

This research study addressed several ethical considerations, particularly regarding anonymity and the risk of coercion. There was a risk that participants could be identified from the information shared during the focus groups. To maintain anonymity, identifiable details such as personal names, towns, and schools were omitted or altered from the transcripts and subsequent research documents. Additionally, participants were assigned pseudonyms, which were consistently used throughout all documentation and transcripts to safeguard their identities.

Several measures were also implemented to reduce or avoid potential coercion. Firstly, an independent party, such as MAPAS Student Support Advisors, were used to recruit focus group participants, thereby eliminating any perceived power imbalance or obligation. Clear communication emphasised that participation was voluntary and would not affect their relationship with their Student Support Advisor. Additionally, the researcher conducted separate information discussions to ensure participants understood the voluntary nature of their involvement. These issues were further addressed and discussed in a consultation meeting with the Student Support Advisors, emphasising the importance of voluntary participation.

The ethical implications of the researcher's relationship with current ākonga, particularly the inherent power dynamics, required careful consideration. A deliberate strategy was adopted during the planning phase to include only former ākonga in the focus group to ensure ethical integrity and prevent any potential biases from influencing the focus group. This approach ensured that the discussions were not affected by any ongoing educational relationships, thereby safeguarding the integrity of the data collection process. Moreover, this decision demonstrated a commitment to respecting the autonomy and experiences of participants, ensuring fair and unbiased engagement throughout the study.

### **3.7 Summary of Methodology and Methods**

This chapter commenced with an introduction to Kaupapa Māori Theory, which serves as a theoretical framework to inform the methodology used in this research. It outlines the methodology through a series of statements explaining and contextualising this methodological approach. Highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of this theoretical stance, the chapter outlines the specific methods implemented for data collection, including

focus groups and interviews, all underpinned by Kaupapa Māori Theory. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis, facilitating the discovery, examination, disruption, and presentation of patterns within the data. The findings from the focus groups and interviews are disclosed in the following chapter.

# Chapter Four: Findings

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the thematic analysis and an interpretation of the ākonga focus group and pouako interviews using the methods outlined in the methodologies chapter. Firstly, the chapter briefly describes the participants of the interviews and the focus group. The chapter will then outline the participant experiences, which are organised into three key themes:

1. Challenging teaching and learning factors for academic writing
2. Teaching and learning support factors for academic writing
3. Culturally responsive teaching and learning factors for academic writing

## 4.2 Participants Summary

This study involved a focus group with nine participants. The participants self-identified as being of Māori ethnicity and had recently graduated from the Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences programme. As outlined in the methodology, participants were recruited through the Māori and Pacific Admission Scheme (MAPAS). Participants were selected and invited to a focus group at Ngā Kete Mātauranga, a dedicated study space for MAPAS ākonga. Table 2 provides a summary of the focus group participants.

*Table 2: A summary of student focus group participants*

<b>Student</b>	<b>Iwi</b>	<b>Age/Gender</b>	<b>Pathway</b>	<b>Programme</b>
9	Ngā Puhī (2) Ngā Rauru Kītahi Ngāti Awa/Samoa Ngāti Kahungunu Ngāti Maniapoto Ngāti Rangiwewehi Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga	20, Female (3) 20, Male (2) 21, Female 22, Female 22, Male 24, Female	School Leaver (8)  Alternative Admission (1)	Bachelor of Health Sciences (3)  Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (5)

Ngāti Tūwharetoa Te Arawa Te Rarawa Tūhoe			Bachelor of Nursing (1)
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This study also involved three interviews with Māori educators who teach academic writing skills to Māori foundation ākonga. Participants were recruited through the Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand (FABENZ) society. Participants were selected, and the interviews were held at each participant’s workplace. The participants included two staff members from a university and one from a polytechnic.

### 4.3 Findings

This section presents the findings from the ākonga focus group and pouako interviews. Participants shared diverse experiences related to academic writing, encompassing various learning contexts. The insights gathered from the focus group discussions and interviews were collectively analysed, emphasising their relevance and alignment with the emergent themes identified within this research. Three key themes (see Figure 1) were pertinent to the interviews and focus group discussions: (1). Challenging teaching and learning factors in academic writing, (2). Teaching and learning support factors for academic writing, and (3). Culturally responsive teaching and learning factors for academic writing. The key themes were broken down into subthemes, reflecting and expanding the concepts and insights in the existing literature on academic writing and the keys to success for ākonga Māori in tertiary education. These subthemes were then categorised into broader groups, which served as the foundation for developing four instructional strategies. These strategies were created to guide pouako and tertiary education providers in strengthening the academic writing skills of ākonga Māori in foundational health-related programmes. The instructional strategies

outlined in Figure 1 are: (1) Use culturally responsive teaching and learning practices, (2) Provide a culturally inclusive and safe learning environment, (3) Use relevant, fun and interactive learning activities, and (4) Provide comprehensive resources to support learning.

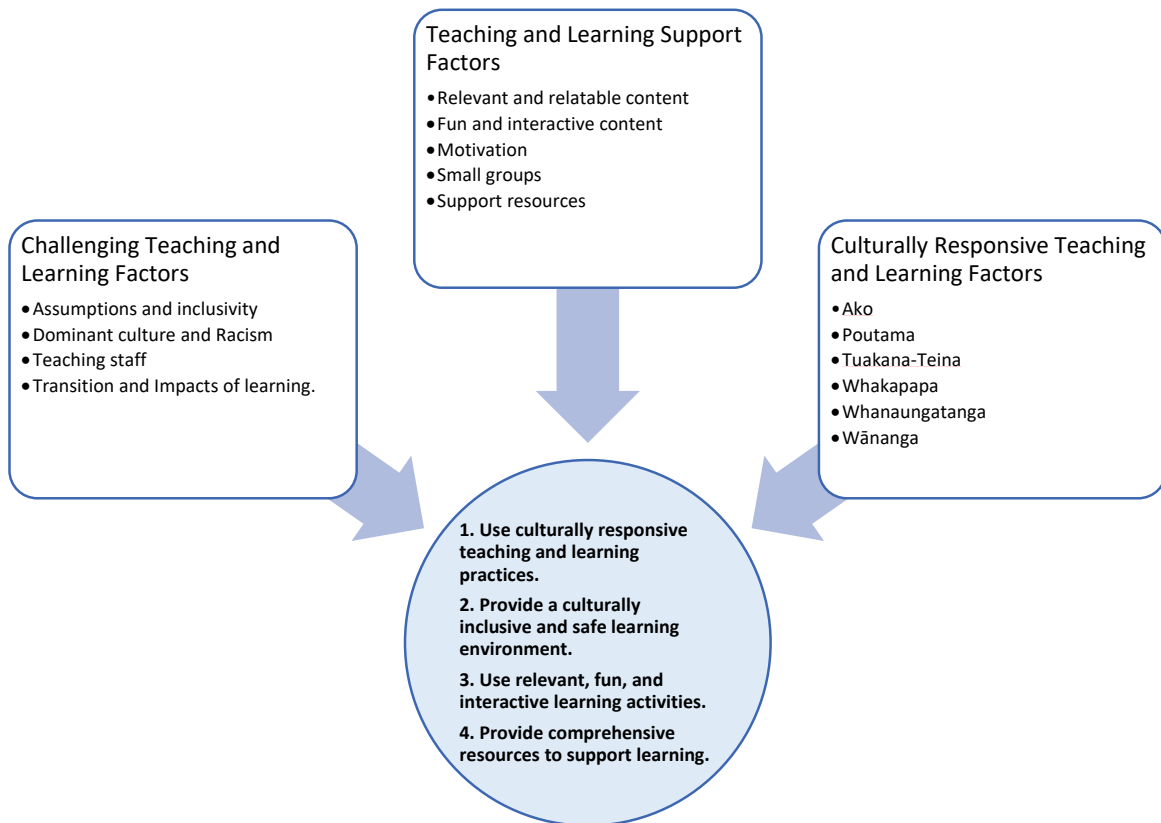


Figure 1: Summary of Instructional Strategies, Key Themes and Subthemes

#### 4.4 Challenging Factors for Teaching and Learning Academic Writing

##### 4.4.1 Assumptions and Inclusivity

Ākongā and pouako highlighted the systemic challenges within the education system that contribute to the marginalisation of ākongā Māori. Ākongā, especially those transitioning from Te Kura Kaupapa Māori to Westernised-dominated educational environments, spoke

about the challenges they faced in understanding and being understood due to differences in language and cultural contexts. They encountered judgments and misunderstandings when unfamiliar with the English equivalents of concepts they know in te reo Māori, leading to feelings of inadequacy and frustration, as highlighted in the following excerpt.

There's almost a judgment when you don't know real simple words, but actually, it's because we know the Māori word, and we don't know the English version of that because you're not taught it in a Kura Kaupapa... You're not actually allowed to speak English, so I remember when I say things like, oh, what does this mean? What is it? Hypotenuse [the longest side of a right-angled triangle, the side opposite the right angle] or something. I was like, what? And they were like, what do you mean you don't know what it means? And I was like, yeah, it was like, taha tāroa... I knew this other side of it, but I think it's important for that to be recognised even when you're teaching APD that's English focused, to acknowledge, hey if you do know a lot of mātauranga content or te reo Māori, that's great! We're going to teach it to you in English. (Ākonga Māori)

Discussions also brought to light a broader issue within the education system that fails to accommodate and value the linguistic diversity and cultural backgrounds of ākonga Māori. To address these challenges, participants advocate for transformative educational reforms that acknowledge the skills and talents that ākonga Māori bring to the table. As demonstrated in the following excerpt, a strengths-based approach that is inclusive and culturally responsive would encourage the dismantling of barriers hindering ākonga Māori from reaching their full potential in educational environments.

Someone's value isn't based on how well they write... have one-on-ones to discuss... the topic of... [their] academic writing and then... personally acknowledge them for

what they do know. Because I think that's something that when you go into a meeting, and you get told that you suck at doing something, you forget that you are actually great at something else, and I think it's really important that if someone has a weakness, that you're able to acknowledge their strengths as well (Ākongā Māori)

#### **4.4.2 Dominant Culture and Racism**

Ākongā and pouako discussed the constant struggle they face navigating learning environments dominated by the norms, values, practices and processes of the dominant culture and reinforced in Westernised education systems.

There's a saying, and it's like if you judge a fish based on its ability to climb a tree, it [will] spend its whole life thinking it's a failure. Yeah, I think it's a great example of when you have kura kaupapa Māori kids or even those who've grown up in te ao Māori coming into this completely Pākehā setting, Pākehā institution, Pākehā values, Pākehā everything and then actually you're at the bottom of everything. If you got judged based on a Pākehā speech, you might get a C, but if you got us to do a karakia, you get an A+, and no one else in their room would even know what a karakia is. You know what I mean. So, I think it's, um, yeah, like a space to be able to say, this is where I wasn't taught how to do XYZ. (Ākongā Māori)

Pouako Māori discussions also highlighted that the university system does not work for Māori. They emphasised that pouako Māori need to help ākongā Māori navigate this Western institutional space to prepare for the stigma, judgement, and racism they will encounter.

We also need to think about preparing our Māori students for what universities should be like for them as well, not just preparing them for what the Western model says it's going to be like for them. So, they need to be injected with some revolution hormones

or something to say that, you know, like the system is not necessarily going to work for you from a te ao Māori point of view. You're going to be pigeonholed in hundreds of different ways that you'll soon realise what racism is going to look like as soon as you walk into your first class. (Pouako Māori)

Experiences of racism and its impacts on ākonga Māori learning were consistently highlighted in pouako discussions, with educators emphasising the responsibility of educational institutions to address prejudice and racism. In the following excerpt, the staff member's (a woman's) implication is shown to be racist because it relies on socially assigned ethnicity—a narrow and stereotypical understanding of Māori identity based on physical appearance. This invalidates the ākonga whakapapa and perpetuates essentialist notions that racial and cultural identities are determined solely by phenotype. Additionally, this ākonga was denied support due to these erroneous assumptions and marginalisation.

I had a young 16-year-old boy that I was taken to meet. He hadn't been working very well on his studies, so when I sat with him, he told me that his father has whakapapa Māori, his mother is European, and he identifies as being Māori and is a blond, blue-eyed, handsome boy. The woman who is in charge of enrolments sent him back to the lecture he was from, and she said, "Oh, he didn't look Māori. How come he's Māori?" Well, you don't say things like that. It doesn't matter what we look like; we are all different, but one cannot deny the whakapapa of being Māori if one identifies with it. (Pouako Māori)

#### **4.4.3 Teaching Staff**

Pouako discussed the challenges in addressing the unique learning preferences and needs of ākonga Māori, including the need for teaching staff to acknowledge and adapt to different

ways of processing and responding to information. As a result, current teaching methods may not adequately support or encourage ākonga Māori, leading to disengagement and underperformance.

I started to see where the gaps were... our students take on board, digest, and then respond. If they respond at all, if it's a lecturer that they feel no rapport with, they generally hold back, feeling that if they say something, it may sound silly compared to others that might have answered the same question or asked a question. (Pouako Māori)

Pouako discussed the critical need for pouako to adopt more empathetic, understanding, and ākonga-centred approaches. This involves recognising and accommodating ākonga diverse backgrounds, learning preferences, and challenges to foster a more inclusive, supportive, and engaging educational environment.

They need encouragement; they need acknowledgement; they need a critique... [where] they can feel they can come to the pouako and the pouako can give them examples but have the patience and the time to do so. The problem being is that you may have a cohort of, let's say, 30 students; 20 of those students are just racing ahead knowing what they're doing, where the other ten are slipping because there is no actual encouragement or engagement.; The lecturer says yes, I do, but they're not listening, but it's more than yes, I do, they're not listening; it's sitting down with [them], encouraging, and using the whānau concept, in order for them to feel valued and that they can do the work. (Pouako Māori)

#### 4.4.4 Transitions and Impacts on Learning

Ākongā shared issues of equity, systemic bias, and the need for universities to adopt educational practices that are more inclusive and acknowledge and accommodate the diverse realities and challenges of ākongā Māori. These factors can negatively impact their academic performance and overall university experience.

It's still probably just people who like have... close proximity to whiteness, like people who went to high decile schools, um, people whose parents are still together, and people whose only priority and [are] really fortunate and [it is] really lovely for them is to study... [However,] I had to work three different jobs in Cert... so I could afford to turn up to classes, and that was hard to balance that and then be told that your writing is not as good... Your grades and what you're getting isn't necessarily a reflection of the amount of effort that you're putting in because, like, for a lot of Māori people, that's not our reality, but once again, I don't know, like, it still does favour people who have real close proximity to whiteness. (Ākongā Māori)

Ākongā discussed the challenges they faced moving into a city and finding themselves without their whānau support.

We don't really have whānau here in Auckland. Um, yeah, it's hard. Even though it doesn't mostly relate to writing, it still does. If I've got to write a 2500-word essay on something. You like stressing out, or if you are working or have no family at home, it does impact you. (Ākongā Māori)

Ākongā raised several concerns about the transition experiences for ākongā Māori moving from a Te Wharekura Kaupapa Māori (Māori immersion secondary school) to an English-medium education system. This shift presents unique challenges for ākongā Māori as they move into educational environments where English is the primary language of instruction,

requiring adaptation to different linguistic and cultural norms that can impact their learning and sense of identity.

I don't know what it was like for the rest of the kura (Māori immersion school) kids, but they didn't start teaching us how to read [in English] until we were like 13 [years old]. So, I couldn't read English until I was 13. We didn't have English classes until I actually left kura and went to Kaitaia College in year 11. So, I must be like 15 [years old] before I actually started learning, and by then, they assumed you learned it and that you [had] learnt it through to intermediate... to the beginning of high school. But that was me doing it for the first time, yeah, in this course. (Ākonga Māori)

Another ākonga highlighted the importance of supporting ākonga through these transitions and the need for educational systems to acknowledge and value multiple languages and cultures.

For me, it was like I came from a space of learning everything into te reo Māori, so the only place where we spoke English was in the English class, and you couldn't say a single word of Pākehā outside. So, I remember one of my fears coming into even Cert was being taught in English because I was like, I've never actually had an English teacher who couldn't speak Māori and even in all my other classes like maths, we were taught [in Māori]. We did calculus in te reo Māori, so I had to translate even trig and stuff; that was like, I was translating in my head the whole time. And with sentence structures, I got English all backwards because English is the opposite of Māori structures in sentences, and I was good at Māori, but I wasn't good at English if you just took me and valued me based on my English alone. (Ākonga Māori)

## 4.5 Teaching and Learning Support Factors for Academic Writing

### 4.5.1 Relevant and Relatable Content

Ākonga and pouako discussed the importance of contextualising academic learning in ways that are relevant and relatable to ākonga. They suggest using content that reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of ākonga, making the delivery of academic writing concepts more accessible and engaging.

I didn't see as much of it in Cert, but it was kind of learning why we're learning about it. So, why is this relevant? And I think there needs to be a reminder of that, sometimes every lecture, depending on what you're teaching. But, like, if you're going to teach us for five weeks about how to write a sentence, maybe say why are we actually doing this. And I don't mean like so you can get into med; I mean for when you're writing a prescription note for your patients who are going to be your whānau, and they need to be able to understand it. (Ākonga Māori)

Ākonga also emphasised the significance of using culturally relevant topics and discussions in academic writing. When ākonga engage with topics like racism and cultural identity, academic writing evolves from a routine task into a meaningful platform for voicing their experiences and perspectives. This fosters a deeper understanding and connection with the material and boosts their interest and motivation, making academic writing a more relatable and enriching experience.

I found that it was quite refreshing; maybe that was just me because I enjoyed them, but like those talks, those bicultural talks, what is racism?... as like a refreshing topic and then maybe even adding like a reflection or something... I know it doesn't have much to do with academic writing, but just like for Māori, academic writing is just the

production of all of these things that contribute to who we are anyway. So, it's all those things that motivate us to do or pursue academic writing. (Ākongā Māori)

The ākongā discussion went beyond using cultural content; they advocated integrating familiar cultural concepts and metaphors as tools to elucidate the structures of academic writing. They all agreed that the following example is something they could all relate to. Doing this transforms academic writing from a daunting task into a more approachable and relatable practice.

I want to throw something out the gate. Yeah, um, maybe you could use, like, I don't know, visual cues. You can use a waka. A tauihu (bow, prow, figurehead of a canoe) is your introduction, te takere (hull of a canoe/collective impact initiative) is your body, and te kei (stern of a canoe) is your conclusion. Or you could use different models. I have no idea if that works, but it is something I can relate to. (Ākongā Māori).

The use of relevant content was also a recurring theme with pouako, who spoke in detail of how they used cultural and general analogies and metaphors to enhance ākongā ability to grasp and connect with these concepts.

Learning academic writing is a bit like learning how to play a game of rugby. There's a lot involved that you don't see from sitting on the sideline, but you need to know what the rules are so you know how far you can go and not break them. So, the sports-minded people seem to relate quite well to that... they have rules, and good players know the rules, and they, you know, they practice, they train, they just don't go out there and think, okay now I can go [and] play for the All Blacks. You know, they've got to put that time in. And the students also need to be good academic writers to get the high marks at university. [They] need to train, know what the rules are, know what

the boundaries are, need to train towards it, and need to practice, and then I'd get them to look around at the staff at the university, and say if they can do it, you can do it. (Pouako Māori)

#### **4.5.2 Fun, Interactive, and Practical Activities**

Ākonga and pouako shared that learning academic writing must be engaging and enjoyable. This approach significantly boosts ākonga engagement, which is crucial when ākonga might initially be reluctant to focus on writing skills. They emphasised that fun elements in the learning process maintain their focus and enhance their enthusiasm for participating.

Having more engaging, obviously, it can't all be just fun and games but just like having activities. Once you've learned something to apply it in a more fun and interactive sort of atmosphere, a little bit of competition, maybe like, for creative students, having more artistic ways of doing it type of thing, like, learning about how you symbolise something in an essay or something, being able to do a visual copy for those words or things, like catering to different types of learning and stuff. (Ākonga Māori)

In addition, ākonga highlighted the importance of interactive activities. These interactions foster deeper involvement during the sessions and aid in effectively grasping and retaining the concepts and structures of academic writing.

For the lecture where we had to break down the question, honestly, I really hate it... I know how to read a question type of thing, but it was really valuable, and I really thought I knew more than I did. I really switched myself up by not engaging. But it's kind of hard to find a way to make sure that everyone's engaging in content that may not be, like, the most exciting. Like, break down this question, I know that's sort of,

like, how you have to do it, but I just wish there was a way where we could get the information, a different way, or just, maybe, being more interactive. (Ākonga Māori)

Both ākonga and pouako shared practical examples to emphasise the importance of integrating fun activities to enhance engagement and interaction.

We have a lot of games like that on how to change common language into something that's academic, and I use the whiteboard and whiteboard markers for them to play with it, or they'll do it in groups and translate the sentences. Example sentences they've either created themselves, or I've created for them into what they think is academic speak, and then we vote on which is the one closest to which we get the better fits in that criteria, that genre of academic writing, the best. (Pouako Māori)

#### **4.5.3 Small Groups**

Ākonga and pouako expressed that group size is crucial in determining the level of individual engagement when teaching academic writing. As highlighted in the following excerpt, smaller groups could help individuals who may be typically more reserved or less inclined to speak up in larger settings feel more at ease and willing to contribute their thoughts.

The less people there are, the more chances of everyone actually speaking... I feel like in a room like this, there will be speakers who speak, and there'll be people who are quite happy to listen, and that's allowed. But I think the less people you have, the more comfortable quiet people are going to feel to actually speak. (Ākonga Māori)

Pouako also expressed the benefits of smaller group settings. They highlighted that not only do smaller groups enhance ākonga learning, but they also allow for a more personalised and manageable learning environment. This approach facilitates better management of the learning space and enhances the ability to monitor and support each ākonga progress.

Smaller groups are better and not only for the students but also for yourself [educators] because you think about yourself too, as well. As a person facilitating and teaching those things, you need to be able to manage their space, and it is hard to monitor 60 students sitting in front of you, to see if they're progressing, [and] to see if they are getting anywhere. Unless you have support for them, so you know, that whole ratio, teaching student ratio, um, getting that, so that you've got... as many helpers as possible. (Pouako Māori)

#### **4.5.4 Support Resources**

Ākonga and pouako advocated for a holistic view of learning, where learning is not just about absorbing content but also about how it is taught, the structures in place to support ākonga Māori and the communal sharing of knowledge and strategies for success. They emphasised the significance of using examples when teaching concepts. Using examples when teaching helps make abstract ideas more comprehensible and meaningful when accompanied by concrete examples, especially for ākonga encountering the material for the first time.

I remember a really helpful lecture, and it was about paraphrasing. I think this is a really important thing as well. When you teach something, especially to, like, someone who's either not had that teaching before, examples are so important because teaching a concept without an example honestly means nothing to me (Ākonga Māori)

Ākonga also discussed how practical advice and simple tips, such as editing drafts multiple times and seeking feedback from various sources, can significantly impact their academic work and mindset. They highlighted the importance of guidance and practical strategies for improvement in the learning process.

I thought I'd mention it – tips and advice. Those are really helpful because I think one-liners really stick with you for quite a long time. Things that you don't actually think [about], well, things I couldn't think of until it actually happened, so growing up in kura, our teacher was the one who proofread my mahi, but when you're at uni, I figured you couldn't go to the lecturer and go hey can you proofread something that you're about to mark. So, one thing, you know, a tip was to have three different people read it. They have to be able to understand it, even someone who's not even in your degree. If they don't understand it, then someone who's in your degree may not as well. And then the whole editing thing, like, once you've written something, apparently that's not the final copy or something. Someone once said your first draft shouldn't look like your final copy. I said, my draft is my final copy. Someone said seven times for an A+, so you should edit seven times... they were tips that were really helpful. (Ākonga Māori)

Similarly, ākonga and pouako shared their thoughts on using Artificial Intelligence tools, such as Grammarly, as support resources. Staff noted that while Grammarly can assist ākonga by offering suggestions for improving writing, there are concerns about over-reliance on the tool. One pouako expressed that ākonga often use Grammarly without fully understanding the explanations provided, which can lead to disjointed writing.

Students chucking... [their work] into Grammarly, um, but they don't necessarily understand what Grammarly [is]. You know, what those explanations mean, it's like, okay, I'll just accept it, I'll just keep accepting things, and it's going to fix it all up, and then all the sentences don't match each other, it's like, oh great, thank you, Grammarly. (Pouako)

On the other hand, both ākongā and pouako agreed that Grammarly could be an effective learning tool if ākongā used it to understand and learn from the corrections rather than seeing it as a quick fix. In this regard, Grammarly and similar AI tools can be valuable resources for improving academic writing, provided they are integrated into a broader strategy of writing development. This approach should include multiple drafts, active proofreading, and peer feedback.

It helps our students. If our students learnt to use it as a learning tool, not as a fix-it-up tool. Learn from it; that's what they need to do... that way, you don't need to chuck it into Grammarly... so make sure that they're proofing what they're doing; now, give it a shot and have a go at proofing your stuff. (Pouako)

Ākongā also stressed the necessity of providing ākongā with adequate support and resources, including stress management advice, study techniques, and accessibility to counselling and learning support services. It highlights the need for pouako to offer guidance on where ākongā can turn for help, including academic, emotional, and logistical support.

When you set up your whole canvas page... I think you [should] have: Are you stressed or how to destress, study techniques and tips and stuff like that... So, who to go to, like, counselling, learning disabilities, Te Fale Pouawhina... [or] have little scenarios, like how do you feel about your writing, maybe check out this person, or do you need references, do you need references for like two to three weeks because they definitely won't get back to you overnight, go to the library services, or are you feeling like you could do better, or do you think your writing is great, but it's not actually coming through? (Ākongā Māori)

Ākongā also touched on the benefits of learning from peers and the value of shared experiences and knowledge within the ākongā cohort. It highlights that ākongā can gain

invaluable insights and tips through word of mouth, which can ease their academic journey and help them navigate challenges more effectively. This also emphasises the importance of pouako increasing the visibility and accessibility of academic writing support resources.

It was [by] word of mouth that told me about reference cite. It's always word of mouth, aye. That's what I think is great about other students. They've got really great tips because they've gone through it and... found out the hard way... I think it's really important to find students who have found things that are actually really helpful, so when we're asked to speak to First Years, they say [their] tips. (Ākonga Māori)

#### **4.5.5 Motivation**

Pouako and ākonga highlighted the significance of creating a learning environment where ākonga feel personally connected to their goals, valued for their unique identities and efforts, and supported in their academic journey. They advocated for an environment fostering intrinsic motivation and a sense of value among ākonga, encouraging them to pursue their goals enthusiastically and resiliently.

This is on, like, motivation... kind of like... [a] real-life example. I remember it from [my] APD class [and] it's only one of the best things. [The pouako] got us to close our eyes for two minutes, and then we were told to visualise and detail what it would be like to graduate. At the time, I was still 17... and then, really quietly, everyone had to write what they would say in their graduation speech. I still have that piece of paper with me, and in the class, there were like tears, and stuff like that, but I remember there was like a shift... in wairua... I think when you go to uni, you get really lost in te ao Pākehā, and sometimes you forget where you're from, even if you weren't brought up in te ao Māori, even they miss home like it's really normal, but I think if you can

acknowledge home in a place that's far away from home, it kind of brings why you're actually there... from the outside, everyone's like, yeah, I want to do Med; it looks mean. When you're in Med, you talk about, you know, like, among doctors, there's such high suicide rates, and among many students like Grafton Hall, the old Grafton had to, like, barricade the whole ninth floor because it was the closest one to med school. And I think we need more emphasis on why we do what we do and normalising feeling homesick. (Ākonga Māori)

Pouako emphasised the importance of motivating ākonga for their subjects and cultivating a passion for the material they are learning. It encourages ākonga to fully engage in the content and helps boost their desire to learn and discover more.

I'm trying to instil a little bit of fire in their bellies towards... what they're reading, you know, it brings about that critical analysis of what they're reading. The hard part is that once we've taught them the critical analysis of another person's work, it is [hard for them] to apply that back to their own work. That's the tricky part, and I let them know that's tricky. However, it's easy to look at someone else's work and see where they went wrong; it's hard to look at our own work, so I spent a bit of time, you know, trying to help them separate their emotion and their buy-in to the topic from the practical skills of being able to look at it like it doesn't belong to you and see how that looks for them from that point of view. (Ākonga Māori)

## **4.6 Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Factors for Academic Writing**

### **4.6.1 Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Approaches**

As highlighted in the previous section, current Western pedagogical approaches contribute to inequitable educational experiences and challenges for ākonga Māori. This key theme

highlighted the need for culturally responsive teaching and learning approaches, with a particular focus on integrating Māori educational philosophies and practices into teaching and learning. This theme emphasises the importance of understanding and valuing Māori perspectives, such as the concepts of Ako (reciprocal learning), Poutama (step-like progression in learning), Whakapapa (genealogy and making links), and Whanaungatanga (building relationships and community).

#### **4.6.2 Ako (Reciprocal Teaching and Learning)**

Ākonga and pouako emphasised the necessity of employing diverse ako approaches when delivering academic writing skills to ākonga Māori. Ako, a Māori concept of teaching and learning, signifies a reciprocal learning process where the roles of pouako and ākonga are often interchanging, fostering a more inclusive holistic learning environment.

A lot can be done in the way that the curriculum, the pedagogy of it, the idea of the education system and then, also in high school and at university level, is that it's trying to find a package that fits all or close to fitting all. That's part of the complexity that appears with students not being able to cope is because they're chucked into this package where they're expected to fit, and they don't necessarily fit. Some fit better than others, some really don't fit very well, others are kind of like half, and so you know that one [size] fits all delivery needs to change. Yeah, so that's where foundation programmes become important. (Pouako Māori)

#### **4.6.3 Poutama (Scaffolding)**

In most instances, ākonga and pouako spoke about the Poutama (scaffolding) learning approach for ākonga Māori. They emphasised learning as a progressive, holistic journey rather than a series of increasingly difficult tasks. This holistic approach to learning (ako)

advocates for an intuitive and enjoyable learning experience.

So, the Pākehā word, western philosophy, is scaffolding, or we can call it Poutama if you like. It's one of the things my grandmother taught me [about]... the Poutama way of learning things. So, with each little moment, once you've shown that you're capable of doing that, you can start progressing without too much effort. My grandmother never called them the hardest stuff, the more difficult stuff, the more complex stuff. It's just learning other things... I've always enjoyed that language of my grandmother, and I use it myself. I cringe when I hear people say the more difficult stuff. It's that language about how we label things. So, the model of Poutama is elevating our inner selves, our hinengaro (mind), our wairua (spirit), [and] our tinana (body) because we are physically invested. We become sharper and more aware of our abilities to do things... It's about how can students enjoy or... know what learning actually is... because it's such an important skill. You know, that's what we do in life. It is that whole ako where we are constantly learning. (Pouako Māori)

When discussing methods for teaching ākonga academic writing, pouako intuitively explained how they used Poutama in teaching academic writing skills. They illustrated the transition from simple essay structures to complex research, where initial intensive support gradually gives way to independent ākonga learning.

It's broken down into introductions, first paragraph, second paragraph, third paragraph, and conclusion. So, we start off with the introduction first, where they highlight the general statement and identify what the topic of the essay is going to be from that first general statement. Then, they look to see whether any definitions [are needed], you know, and we start with something really quite simple – a basic 1000-word academic essay. By the end of the 12 weeks, they are looking at research articles

from journals and using [them]... Their ability by that stage [is] to identify the different moves from the research article... showing what the gap in learning is, and, you know, how they fulfil that gap by the research that they've done. So, we start very small, work our way through it, and repeat it with different articles and different topics.

(Pouako Māori)

#### **4.6.4 Tuakana-Teina**

Ākonga and pouako talked about the benefits of using a tuakana-teina, a peer-learning model between more experienced (tuakana) and less experienced (teina), to support the sharing of knowledge and experience.

It will be pretty effective if you... have older students ... [leading] a peer... group, just because... if they see – what I would have liked, is if I've seen... a med student or someone in the years above talk to me about... the importance of APD [a writing course: Academic and Professional Development] because at the time, I didn't really see the relevance in it. (Ākonga Māori)

Pouako also emphasised the value of the tuakana-teina model and highlighted the critical need for ensuring that tuakana are well-intentioned, professional, and adequately equipped to provide quality guidance and support for ākonga learning academic writing skills.

I am a strong believer in the tuākana-teina model. Our tuākana – we need to be sure that our tuākana are capable of supporting our students, especially if it is academically. Pastorally, the whole social side of things. I think most do it really well, but when it comes down to the academic side ... [they are] giving them shortcuts, like bad shortcuts, it's like, my, this is not the shortcut you need to be given. So, with tuākana, it's important to have regular feedback sessions, reflection sessions with

them, [and] training, so knowing what the kaupapa is for teaching this course ... making sure that they are capable of providing learning literacy, the academic side of things, so that's our job working with tuākana, and then enabling the tuākana to be able to build that relationship with the team. (Pouako Māori)

#### **4.6.5 Whakapapa**

Pouako spoke about whakapapa as a key concept within their learning space and its role in the classroom. They spoke about the impact on ethnic identity and ākonga knowing who they are and where they are from and using this information as a method to help ākonga be proud and successful in their learning.

I also use whakapapa, the whakapapa model, because I tell them that sitting behind them is their whānau. Who else sits behind them? They tell me. Do you know your marae? Yes. Do you know your hapū? I say, “Do they sit with you? Are they with you or behind you?” They say, “Oh, behind me.” So, I use that model to strengthen their identity... [and] their willingness... [with] the Poutama staircase being the learning process, but the whakapapa, their identity. When they start talking about it, you see them sitting straight in the chair. All I'm after is ownership of their own identity in their cognition. If I can get that, then we know the outcome. If we can't get them to take ownership, and ownership is what sits behind that, we don't know what they are there for. If they're there because mum and dad said, “You've got to go”, you're not going to get the same strengths because their heart isn't there, but the parent wants them to be. So, if I can catch all of that in the first part, then this is where I'm trying to have a more successful model. (Pouako Māori)

Another pouako discussed whakapapa links within a wānanga learning setting, which extends

beyond the traditional scope of whānau ties. This example emphasises the importance of exploring and recognising individuals' diverse connections.

It's about community and whānau in a space learning together as opposed to individual students that walk up. So, it's about that connectedness together, so finding those whakapapa links, just not the family ones. It could be schools, you know, you could have gone to the same schools, and that still happens. Our students go to the same school, and they don't meet each other until they get to university. (Pouako Māori)

In general, pouako discussions highlighted that engaging and acknowledging ākongā Māori whakapapa greatly contributes to the success of ākongā Māori.

I now get my academic manager saying oh wow, this Māori student, you know, he's succeeding so well now. It's because you spend time with them, you acknowledge their whakapapa, you engage with them, [and] you look at a strategy that's going to be advantageous for them. (Pouako Māori)

#### **4.6.6 Whakawhanaungatanga**

Pouako discussed the importance of creating spaces for ākongā to establish relationships with their peers and pouako. These connections allowed them to build whānau bonds and a sense of belonging and community.

Before we even do that, of course, we have to have whakawhanaungatanga. So, by the time I start getting them to get off their chairs and go sit here and do this and do that... we've spent an extensive time building relationships. We're all committed together to working towards the outcome, which is then passing this course and going on to university to their desired degree. (Pouako Māori)

Ākonga shared many examples demonstrating the whanaunagatanga developed by their pouako. This example illustrates how strong relationships enable *tough love*—firm, supportive guidance that holds ākonga accountable while coming from a place of care. These moments may feel confronting, but like a parent’s correction, they aim to help ākonga grow and succeed.

I remember we got told off as we didn't do our readings ... she was like, I can see you... [she] clicked the reading, and it was like 90% of this class didn't do the reading, and she just went HAM [Hard as a mother], and it came from a place of love... and you could tell that because I think it's important to acknowledge that in Cert you're not a number, but you're about to be when you go into Biomed. And that's why, just like our parents discipline us, just like they're encouraging us, that actually it's okay to also... discipline us as well or remind us in... a tough love kind of way but coming from a place of support. (Ākonga Māori)

Pouako also spoke about the implications on ākonga engagement when whanaungatanga is lacking. Although previously mentioned, this quote is particularly relevant in this section as they highlighted how a lack of connection with pouako could lead ākonga to hold back, making them less likely to engage openly.

If it's a lecturer that they feel no rapport with, they generally hold back, feeling that if they say something, it may sound silly compared to others that might have answered the same question or asked a question. (Pouako Māori)

#### **4.6.7 Wānanga**

Pouako spoke in depth about the effectiveness and cultural responsiveness of a wānanga learning environment for ākonga Māori. A *wānanga space* is an inclusive, collaborative, and

culturally grounded learning environment that fosters dialogue, reflection, and collective meaning-making. They emphasised the importance of whānau-based, collaborative learning that values and leverages ākonga backgrounds, experiences, and contributions, fostering a sense of belonging and support that enhances their success.

Wānanga i ngā wā katoa. Whole semester wānanga. We've been using this delivery for different programmes, for different spaces, and it works for our students, it works for Māori, it works for our Pacific students because it's something that's familiar. It's reinforced within their communities and their whānau. Many of our Māori students, even though they might be disconnected, they still operate and function in very whānau ways as communities. So, placing them in a community learning space, in a wānanga space, will tend to work better for them. Then, they don't have to think about navigating difficult spaces. So they get to learn... what can work for them. I'm not saying that it's going to work for every Māori student, but there is definitely an attraction. I haven't had a student yet that says this doesn't work for me. (Pouako Māori)

Pouako shared how the wānanga learning environment supports learning for ākonga Māori. They highlighted that it is a place where everyone's abilities are seen and valued.

What the wānanga learning environment space does is that, you know, it's about you, what you bring to the space, what you can offer to others, and what others can offer to help and support you to get through. That's what we do in that wānanga space... we immediately dissipate those feelings of inadequacy, of you know, I'm dumb, you know, I've got nothing to give, and so it's putting people in a position where their talents, their capabilities are clearly identified and that they know that they can contribute to that space. (Pouako Māori)

Pouako also emphasised that while a wānanga space requires more effort, the rewards are greater, enabling a thorough exploration of lessons and ensuring ākonga fully grasp the content.

That's why I am all for wānanga. Because in that environment, in that space, you can take the time to break down these elements to ensure that students are getting it. As opposed to stage on the stage, here is what you're expected to do; here it is: go off and do it, and then they still repeat the same mistakes because they didn't get it. So, the criticism is that hand holding. Well, that's not handholding. It's just a particular way of learning and teaching people. Even in Western pedagogy, you know, there are theories that talk about that, and it's like, I'll show you, we'll do it together, then you show me what you need to do, then you go off and do, and then you show me. It's that type of thing. It's more work, but if the end product is to have students... [improve] their written capability, then perhaps that's what we need to do. Not perhaps; that is what we need to do. (Pouako Māori)

#### **4.7 Summary of Findings**

This chapter presents the findings from interviews and focus group discussions, highlighting three key themes: challenging, supporting, and culturally responsive factors for academic writing. These themes were organised into subthemes, informing the creation of instructional strategies to enhance the academic writing skills of ākonga Māori in foundational health-related courses.

Challenging Factors for Academic Writing include systemic challenges, cultural dominance, and the need for adaptable teaching approaches. Ākonga Māori face issues such as barriers and navigating Western-dominated environments, which can result in experiences of racism

and marginalisation. Transitioning from Māori to English-medium education also presents significant difficulties, highlighting the need for more diverse and flexible teaching methods.

Supporting Factors for Academic Writing emphasise culturally relevant content, engaging activities, small group benefits, comprehensive resources, and motivational environments. Relatable topics, interactive teaching methods, and smaller group settings enhance ākonga engagement and personalised learning. Providing adequate support and practical advice and creating environments that foster intrinsic motivation is crucial for academic success.

Culturally Responsive Factors for Academic Writing focus on integrating Māori educational practices, reciprocal learning, scaffolded learning, peer learning, and building relationships. Incorporating Māori philosophies, such as reciprocal teaching and learning (Ako) and viewing education as a holistic and progressive journey (Poutama), along with peer learning models (Tuakana-Teina) and fostering relationships (Whakawhanaungatanga), creates a supportive and culturally respectful learning environment.

These findings have informed the development of instructional strategies designed to provide targeted support for ākonga Māori, ensuring their academic writing success in foundational health-related courses. The next chapter will examine the implications of these findings in the context of existing research.

# Chapter Five: Discussion

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the implications of the research findings, placing them within the context of broader literature. It will elucidate the overarching conclusions and advice of teaching and learning practices that support Māori foundation ākonga when delivering academic writing skills in tertiary education. Furthermore, a critical discussion of the strengths and limitations of the research design will be discussed.

## 5.2 Discussion

This research honours the experiences of ākonga Māori and pouako Māori, highlighting their perceptions and perspectives on the challenges and support factors that contribute to effective teaching and learning of academic writing for ākonga Māori in foundation courses/programmes. Four key instructional strategies were identified to enhance the delivery of academic writing skills for Māori Foundation ākonga. These findings are supported and contextualised with relevant literature and include:

1. Use culturally responsive teaching and learning practices.
2. Provide a culturally inclusive and safe learning environment.
3. Use relevant, fun, and interactive learning activities.
4. Provide comprehensive resources to support learning.

These instructional strategies encompass various teaching and learning components that offer detailed guidance. These components are illustrated in Figure 2 and will be discussed in the following sections.



Figure 2: Instructional Strategies and Teaching and Learning Components

### 5.2.1 Use Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Practices

This research revealed the significance of pouako adopting culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies to enhance academic writing skills among ākongā Māori. It reaffirms the need for education systems to transition from traditional Western methods to more holistic and inclusive models that better support ākongā Māori success. This is consistent with other studies that foster inclusive, engaging, and positive learning environments that recognise and incorporate the rich cultural heritage, perspective, and knowledge systems of ākongā Māori into the academic curriculum (Bishop, 2023; Curtis et al., 2015; Rātima et al., 2022). Furthermore, Kelly et al. (2020) highlight how culturally responsive teaching practices acknowledge and actively embrace cultural backgrounds, employing writing to help ākongā

explore and affirm their identities. Such integration of Māori perspectives enhances classroom engagement and academic achievement, reinforcing the role of cultural responsiveness in education (Rātima et al., 2022).

### **Diverse Ako Methods**

Many participants emphasised the importance of adopting diverse ako methods in delivering academic writing skills, as well as a pressing need for the educational system, including both secondary and tertiary levels, to move away from a uniform approach of a one-size-fits-all curriculum towards more culturally appropriate teaching and learning methods for ākongā Māori (pp. 60-61). This demand for change is not new; previous research has repeatedly highlighted the necessity for institutions and pouako to make meaningful adjustments in their approaches to ensure the success of ākongā Māori (Curtis et al., 2017; Mayeda et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2022). Many participants emphasised that this is crucial for creating a more adaptable and supportive learning environment that recognises and values the diversity of ākongā experiences and learning preferences. This insight is particularly valuable for pouako, urging them to address the power imbalance in the classroom and to implement more flexible and responsive teaching methods that ensure a more equitable and effective educational experience for ākongā Māori. It is imperative for educational institutions to heed these findings and proactively transform their teaching practices to genuinely support the academic success and well-being of ākongā Māori.

### **Poutama**

The research reaffirms the importance of a holistic and progressive learning journey, emphasising the poutama approach in teaching academic writing skills to ākongā Māori. Integrating cultural wisdom and elements into the educational process fosters an intuitive

and enjoyable learning experience, moving beyond the traditional perception of learning as a series of increasingly complex tasks. Instead, it views progression in learning as a natural accumulation of knowledge, where each step builds upon the previous one, making learning more accessible and attuned to the ākonga capabilities (Tangaere, 1997). The poutama approach, as opposed to traditional scaffolding methods, remains an integral aspect of ākonga academic development. This approach leverages deep cultural knowledge to enhance recall and understanding, reducing reliance on rote learning. By employing this model, pouako begin with foundational skills, gradually introducing more complex concepts and incrementally allowing ākonga to develop their academic writing abilities. This strategy boosts their confidence and independence and nurtures a supportive, empowering educational environment that values learning as a continuous and life-long journey. Such an approach is instrumental in academic and personal growth, aligning perfectly with the holistic development goals for ākonga Māori.

### **Tuākana-tēina**

The research also illuminates the importance of the tuākana-tēina peer teaching model in strengthening academic writing skills among ākonga Māori. By adopting this approach, pouako can foster a more open, comfortable learning environment that encourages active participation, discussion, and peer-to-peer learning, all within a framework that respects and promotes Māori cultural values. The tuākana-tēina relationship, traditionally characterised by a formal structure and significant responsibilities for both parties to fulfil their roles correctly, deepens understanding and facilitates the sharing of knowledge. This dynamic enriches the educational experience and integrates the cultural fabric of ākonga Māori into the academic setting. This model's alignment with cultural values creates a conducive

learning atmosphere that is both culturally pertinent and highly effective, leading to improved academic outcomes. As demonstrated through this research, incorporating such culturally responsive teaching practices is pivotal in transforming educational dynamics, making academic writing skills acquisition more intuitive, respectful, and ultimately successful for ākonga Māori while preserving their cultural integrity and identity.

### **Whakawhanaungatanga**

Lastly, this research reaffirms the essential role of whakawhanaungatanga in fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment tailored to the needs of ākonga Māori learning academic writing skills (pp. 74-75). While nurturing relationships to enhance the educational outcomes of ākonga Māori is not novel, whakawhanaungatanga remains a critical factor for success. It is a powerful mechanism to instil a sense of belonging and connection, encouraging ākonga to engage deeply with their academic material and refine crucial writing abilities. Consequently, pouako must prioritise establishing authentic, meaningful, and reciprocal relationships. This strategic focus will ensure the creation of learning environments that not only accommodate but actively promote the holistic development and well-being of ākonga Māori, embodying the true spirit of whakawhanaungatanga in educational practice.

### **5.2.2 Provide a Culturally Inclusive and Safe Learning Environment**

This research has revealed the importance of fostering a culturally inclusive and safe learning environment for ākonga Māori, particularly in teaching and learning academic writing skills. It highlights the necessity of moving beyond superficial inclusivity towards genuine integration of Māori cultural identities into all aspects of classroom interaction. This approach demands a profound transformation towards fully embracing Māori values, beliefs, and practices, ensuring thorough incorporation into the curriculum, instructional strategies, and

educational experience. Many research participants emphasised the importance of mitigating the cultural dissonance ākongā Māori often experience in predominantly Western educational institutions. By weaving Māori perspectives throughout the educational experience, pouako can create a more supportive and enriching learning atmosphere that respects and reflects the rich cultural background of ākongā Māori. Furthermore, this approach aligns with previous research highlighting the transformative impact of integrating Māori cultural identities into educational frameworks, enhancing engagement, retention and academic success among ākongā Māori (Airini et al., 2011; Curtis, 2016; Chavel & Rean, 2012; Fonua, 2020).

### **Addressing Systemic Barriers**

The narratives shared by ākongā Māori also bring to light the complex challenges and systemic barriers they encounter within the tertiary education landscape (pp. 70-71). These accounts emphasise the need for providers to embrace more inclusive educational practices, attentively acknowledging and accommodating the distinct realities and adversities ākongā Māori face. The issues of equity and systemic bias, as described by the ākongā, not only hinder their academic achievements but also affect their overall experience at university. Ākongā Māori spoke about balancing multiple jobs to afford education, navigating transitions from Te Wharekura Kaupapa Māori to English-medium instruction, and the absence of whānau support in urban settings exemplify the significant obstacles that disproportionately impact ākongā Māori (p. 71). This discussion highlights the obligation for educational institutions to enact systemic changes, fostering an environment where equitable opportunities for success are accessible to all ākongā, irrespective of their background or circumstances. By integrating culturally responsive pedagogies that honour the identities and experiences of ākongā Māori,

pouako and tertiary institutions can begin dismantling the systemic biases ingrained within the educational system.

The research further emphasises the struggles ākonga Māori endure within learning environments dominated by Western values, compounded by experiences of racism and judgment (pp. 73-74). Participants highlighted that these challenges hinder their academic achievement and affect their sense of belonging and identity. While these findings are not unprecedented and have been documented in other studies (Curtis et al., 2012; Mayeda, 2022; Smith et al., 2022), they suggest that current strategies are ineffective, highlighting the immediate need for pouako and institutions to take action to improve their practices. Understanding and addressing these challenges are crucial for advancing equity and social justice in education. By recognising the impact of racism and judgment on academic achievement, as well as on ākonga sense of belonging and identity, this research sheds light on systemic inequities within educational systems. The research supports the need for culturally responsive pedagogies, policies, and institutional practices that honour and celebrate Māori culture and identity. Failure to address these issues perpetuates cycles of marginalisation and exclusion, ultimately undermining educational potential, educational outcomes, and well-being of ākonga Māori. Therefore, this research urges pouako, policymakers, and institutions to prioritise the needs of ākonga Māori and strive for inclusive, culturally affirming learning environments.

### **Role of Teaching Staff**

This research also identifies the critical role of teaching staff in creating a safe and inclusive learning environment by addressing the unique learning preferences and needs of ākonga Māori. Teaching staff that are empathetic and understanding of the diverse backgrounds,

learning preferences, and challenges of ākonga Māori, and take an ākonga-centred approach to teaching that acknowledges and addresses them are essential for fostering a supportive, inclusive, and engaging educational environment that can significantly enhance the academic experiences and outcomes of ākonga Māori.

### **Advancing Culturally Inclusive Learning Environments**

While the concept of culturally inclusive education is not new, this research provides fresh insights into its application within the context of teaching academic writing to ākonga Māori. It complements existing studies that have explored the positive impacts of cultural inclusivity on ākonga engagement and achievement, such as Bishop, Ratima et al., and Macfarlane et al. work on culturally responsive approaches in Aotearoa schools. By focusing specifically on the learning environment, this study points out cultural safety's foundational role in educational success, aligning with broader educational goals of equity and inclusion. It also begins to address a gap in the literature by exploring how these principles can be applied specifically to writing instruction, an area that has received limited attention in previous research. This is demonstrated through the integration of tuakana-teina and wānanga within the learning environment that supports academic writing – practices that remain under-represented in published research on academic writing.

The research reinforces the imperative for educational settings to embrace and implement strategies that ensure a culturally inclusive and safe environment for ākonga Māori. It calls for a concerted effort among pouako, administrators, and policy-makers to acknowledge and address the unique cultural needs and values of ākonga Māori, thereby paving the way for a more equitable and effective educational system. This shift towards cultural inclusivity

benefits ākonga Māori and enriches the educational experience for all ākonga, fostering a more diverse, understanding, and inclusive society.

### **5.2.3 Use Relevant, Fun, and Interactive Learning Activities**

#### **Integration of Cultural Context in Academic Learning**

This research demonstrates that contextualising academic learning to resonate with ākonga diverse backgrounds and experiences is crucial for effective education. Both ākonga and pouako emphasised that integrating content reflecting ākonga cultural and personal identities makes academic writing concepts more accessible and engaging (p. 64). This finding is consistent with Bishop (2023) assertion that a classroom environment where ākonga Māori see their identity, language, and culture as valued assets rather than barriers to academic success is crucial. Furthermore, Gay (2018) supports this by highlighting the significance of culturally responsive teaching in promoting ākonga engagement and achievement.

This approach maintains ākonga interest and motivation by transitioning learning from a purely academic exercise to a meaningful exploration of personal and cultural identity. While this aligns with existing literature on culturally responsive teaching (Bishop, 2023; Bishop & Glynn, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2014), it extends existing work by demonstrating how these practices can be applied specifically to the development of academic writing capabilities—an area where further research and practical insight are needed. Specifically, it illustrates how writing instruction can be grounded in kaupapa Māori principles in ways that affirm identity, build confidence, and foster academic success for ākonga Māori in bridging and foundation programmes. This shows that cultural relevance can transform routine writing tasks into powerful platforms for personal expression, voice, and engagement. This approach is also

supported by Paris (2021), who argues that culturally sustaining pedagogy should perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of democratic education.

Many ākonga highlighted the practical benefits of connecting academic writing skills to real-life applications (p. 64). They noted that understanding how these skills apply to real-world scenarios, such as writing clear prescriptions for patients in their community, adds significant value to their learning experience, emphasising the importance of consistently linking academic content with practical outcomes to maintain relevance and foster engagement. This perspective aligns with Freire's (1970) concept of praxis, which calls attention to the critical interplay between reflection and action as a means to transform the world.

### **Cultural Relevance in Academic Writing**

Many ākonga stressed the significance of using culturally relevant topics and discussions in academic writing (p. 64). Engaging with themes such as racism and cultural identity transforms academic writing from a routine task into a powerful platform for expressing personal experiences and viewpoints. This is supported by Sleeter (2011) and Savage et al. (2011), who found that when ākonga see their cultural identities reflected in the curriculum, their engagement and academic performance improve. This approach deepens ākonga connection with the material and enhances their understanding and motivation, making the learning experience more enriching and meaningful.

Furthermore, ākonga advocated for integrating familiar cultural concepts and metaphors to demystify academic writing structures (pp. 62-63). For example, comparing essay components to parts of a waka (canoe) makes the abstract structure of academic writing more tangible and relatable. This method demystifies academic writing and resonates deeply with their cultural identity. Pukepuke and Kingi (2019) also emphasise the use of culturally

relevant metaphors and analogies as effective tools in making abstract academic concepts more comprehensible to ākongā. In their project, they utilised the pōwhiri process to help ākongā Māori understand the structure of an academic essay.

Pouako also supported the perspectives of ākongā, emphasising the effectiveness of using cultural and general analogies to explain academic writing structures. For instance, one pouako likened academic writing to learning the rules and strategies of a game like rugby, making the process more relatable and understandable (pp. 62-63). This strategy reinforces the importance of employing analogies that resonate with the understanding of ākongā Māori to foster academic success (Gay, 2018; Kelly et al., 2020). It also aligns with Moll et al. (1992) concept of funds of knowledge, which advocates leveraging ākongā existing cultural knowledge and experiences as valuable educational resources.

### **Engaging Learning Activities**

Integrating fun, interactive, and practical activities into academic writing instruction is crucial for engaging ākongā and improving their learning outcomes. This approach is supported by previous studies that advocate for interactive learning environments to promote deeper involvement and retention (Bishop, 2023; Kelly et al., 2020; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2011).

Davis (2019) provides evidence that interest and motivation play pivotal roles in achieving successful learning outcomes, particularly in the context of academic writing. Both ākongā and pouako stressed that learning academic writing must be engaging and enjoyable to foster deeper involvement and retention, and incorporating creative and competitive elements into the learning process can significantly enhance engagement (p. 64). For instance, using visual aids or artistic representations of writing concepts can make the learning experience more dynamic and accessible.

Interactive activities also play a vital role in helping ākongā grasp and retain academic writing concepts. Hands-on exercises and collaborative tasks enable deeper engagement with the material, leading to better understanding and retention. One ākongā noted that breaking down a question in an interactive session revealed gaps in their knowledge, highlighting the value of interactive learning approaches in identifying and addressing learning needs (p. 64). This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism, which posits that learning is a social process and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others.

### **Group Dynamics in Learning**

The significance of group size in teaching academic writing was highlighted by both ākongā and pouako. Smaller groups were seen as more conducive to individual engagement and participation, especially for those who may be more reserved in larger settings (p. 65). In smaller groups, ākongā feel more comfortable and willing to contribute their thoughts, leading to a more inclusive and interactive learning environment. This finding is consistent with Barwood's (2000) research on cooperative learning, which indicates that smaller group sizes can enhance participation and learning outcomes.

Pouako also emphasised that smaller group settings enhance both ākongā learning and the overall teaching experience by creating a more effective and manageable learning environment for both ākongā and educators (p. 65). Managing a smaller number of ākongā allows for more personalised instruction and better monitoring of each ākongā progress, ensuring that every ākongā receives the attention and support they need to succeed. Barwood (2000) supports this notion, stating that writing programmes should be structured around small groups. This approach fosters more balanced and equitable interactions, ensuring a more supportive and inclusive learning environment.

## **5.2.4 Provide Comprehensive Resources to Support Learning**

### **Holistic Support, Practical Strategies and Comprehensive Resources**

This research emphasises the critical role of support resources in facilitating effective learning for ākonga Māori. Both ākonga and pouako advocated for a holistic view of learning, emphasising that academic writing skills should be taught through comprehensive and supportive methods. A key insight from this research is the importance of using concrete examples when teaching abstract concepts. Ākonga reported that examples are vital for making complex ideas comprehensible and meaningful, particularly for those encountering the material for the first time (p. 66). For instance, an ākonga recalled a lecture on paraphrasing that was particularly effective due to the use of concrete examples. This finding aligns with previous research supporting practical, example-based teaching methods to enhance understanding and retention (Pukepuke & Kingi, 2019).

Additionally, practical advice, such as editing drafts multiple times and seeking feedback from various sources, was found to be significantly impactful. Ākonga shared that receiving simple yet practical tips, such as having multiple people proofread their work, can profoundly affect their academic performance and mindset (p. 66). This advice is especially valuable in helping them understand the importance of iterative improvement in writing. The emphasis on practical strategies highlights the need for teaching methods that go beyond theoretical knowledge, providing ākonga with actionable steps to enhance their writing skills.

Predictively, comprehensive support resources were also identified as crucial for the academic success of ākonga Māori. Ākonga emphasised the need for stress management advice, study techniques, and access to counselling and learning support services. Providing clear guidance on where to seek academic and emotional help was highlighted as essential

for fostering a supportive educational environment. This finding is consistent with research highlighting the importance of holistic support systems in educational settings (Anderson et al., 2024; Bishop, 2023; Curtis et al., 2012; Pukepuke & Kingi, 2019; Wikaire et al., 2017). The practical implications of this research for pouako and policymakers are significant, offering a roadmap for enhancing educational practices and policies to create more effective and supportive learning environments for ākonga Māori.

### **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools**

Lastly, integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools presents a promising avenue for enhancing ākonga learning experiences in academic writing. AI resources can provide personalised support, streamline study processes, and offer innovative ways to engage with academic content. When this research began, AI tools were not readily available; they have since become increasingly prevalent. While there are limited discussions of AI tools from participants, it would be remiss not to discuss the impact AI tools could have on supporting ākonga Māori in their academic writing. AI-powered tools can assist ākonga in various aspects of their academic journey, such as improving writing skills by providing real-time grammar, structure, and style feedback. These tools can also suggest enhancements and identify common errors, making writing more efficient and less daunting. One ākonga noted that practical advice, such as editing drafts multiple times, is crucial (p. 66). AI tools can facilitate this process by offering iterative feedback and helping refine drafts more effectively.

For ākonga Māori in Aotearoa, the implications of using AI writing tools are particularly significant. While these tools can provide valuable support in improving writing skills, it is essential to consider how they interact with the unique educational and cultural needs of

ākonga Māori. One potential drawback of AI tools is the risk of over-reliance, which may hinder the natural learning process and the development of self-editing skills. For ākongā Māori, who may already face educational disparities, it is crucial that they fully engage with and understand their challenges in learning to foster genuine learning and growth. This over-reliance could exacerbate existing challenges, making it harder for ākongā to develop essential critical thinking skills necessary for academic success. Iskender (2023) highlighted concerns about diminished critical thinking skills, emphasising that ākongā Māori must be encouraged to engage with their work and learn from their errors critically.

Moreover, the impact of AI on creativity is a significant consideration for ākongā Māori. Traditional Māori education strongly emphasises holistic learning, which includes creativity and original thinking. If ākongā rely too heavily on AI tools for idea generation, this could stifle their creativity and diminish the richness of their educational experience. Johnke et al. (2023) raised concerns about potentially curtailing creative thinking, highlighting the need for balance in using these tools. Additionally, higher-order writing elements, such as argument structure and coherence, are vital skills that AI tools may not adequately address. For ākongā Māori, developing these skills is crucial for academic success and empowerment. Farrokhnia et al. (2023) pointed out that these aspects require deep understanding and logical thinking, which AI tools cannot provide. Therefore, pouako must provide guidance that complements AI tools, ensuring that ākongā Māori can develop these critical skills.

Lastly, the nuances of tone and context are vital in academic writing, particularly for ākongā Māori, who may wish to incorporate cultural perspectives and values into their work. AI tools might not fully grasp these subtleties, leading to inappropriate or insensitive suggestions. Haleem et al. (2022) observed the limitations of AI in understanding human language and

emotion, highlighting the importance of culturally responsive teaching. Pouako must ensure that AI tools are used to respect and enhance Māori cultural identity rather than undermine it.

While AI writing tools offer significant benefits, pouako must consider their potential drawbacks, particularly for ākonga Māori. By balancing the use of AI with culturally responsive teaching strategies, pouako can help ākonga Māori harness the benefits of these tools while developing critical thinking, creativity, and higher-order writing skills.

### **5.3 Strengths of the Study**

The strengths of this research are multifaceted, highlighting its thoroughness and depth. This research honours the voices and experiences of ākonga Māori and pouako, ensuring that their perspectives and needs are central to the findings, lending authenticity and relevance to the recommendations. Designed, led, and analysed using Kaupapa Māori Theory, the research adopts a non-deficit approach, centring Māori epistemologies and privileging Māori perspectives. This reframing shifts the focus of core challenges from Māori individuals to the education system, aiming to enhance ākonga Māori success by addressing systemic issues. The research's rich and diverse findings provide valuable insights into improving the teaching and learning of academic writing skills for ākonga Māori, identifying several changeable factors within the education system that offer practical avenues for addressing these inequities.

Additionally, the research adopts a culturally responsive framework, emphasising the importance of integrating Māori cultural ways of being into educational practices to enhance engagement and academic success among ākonga Māori. It provides clear, actionable

strategies grounded in relevant literature and is comprehensive in scope, examining both teaching practices and the broader learning environment. The exploration of modern tools like AI adds a holistic view of the educational landscape, ensuring that the findings are well-rounded and practical.

Finally, this research calls for systemic change to address cultural dissonance and systemic barriers, demonstrating a commitment to equity and inclusion. It will revitalise the kaupapa in 2024, highlighting persistent educational disparities and advocating for more effective, culturally aligned teaching practices. By contributing new kōrero, the research expands the discourse on how academic writing can be taught and learnt more effectively among ākonga Māori. This renewed focus and fresh insights emphasise the importance of acknowledging and integrating Māori cultural practices into education, fostering a more supportive and inclusive learning environment that can drive meaningful improvements in tertiary education for ākonga Māori.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

As a qualitative study, the aim was to gather a diverse, rich, and in-depth understanding of ākonga and pouako experiences of academic writing skills. This approach prioritises depth over breadth, allowing for a nuanced exploration of individual perspectives and experiences. However, given the small number of pouako interviews conducted, not all experiences may have been captured. This limitation suggests that some aspects of the pouako experience may remain unexplored, potentially overlooking variations in teaching strategies, challenges, and successes in fostering academic writing skills among ākonga Māori. Despite this limitation, the findings offer valuable insights into the experiences of both ākonga and pouako.

Another limitation of this study is the potential for researcher bias, given my position as an 'insider' to the research project. As a Māori and a current Professional Teaching Fellow teaching academic writing skills to ākonga Māori in the Hikitia te Ora, Certificate in Health Sciences programme, my worldview and positioning may have influenced the interpretation and findings of this research. While Kaupapa Māori Theory explicitly acknowledges that the researcher is an integral part of the research, it is recognised that another researcher might have constructed different categories and themes. To address this potential bias, the methodology chapter thoroughly discusses my worldview and positioning to ensure transparency and provide context for the findings. Despite these efforts, the subjective nature of qualitative research means that the researcher's perspectives and experiences inherently influence the findings.

### **5.5 Opportunities for Further Research**

This research significantly contributes to the growing body of knowledge on academic writing for ākonga Māori in tertiary education, particularly within foundation learning. It lays a robust groundwork for further investigation into culturally responsive education in tertiary education for ākonga Māori. Future studies should explore the broader application of these findings across various educational levels and programmes to validate and expand upon the current results. Moreover, examining the long-term impact of culturally responsive teaching practices on the academic achievement and personal development of ākonga Māori would provide invaluable insights, helping to refine and enhance educational strategies for ākonga Māori.

Further research is needed to explore the potential of AI tools in supporting academic writing skills among ākonga Māori. While AI offers promising opportunities for personalised feedback, grammar checks, and style improvements, it is essential to understand how these tools can

be tailored to meet the unique cultural and educational needs of ākonga Māori. Investigating the integration of AI with culturally responsive teaching practices could reveal how technology can enhance learning experiences without compromising cultural integrity. Additionally, studies should examine the impact of AI on critical thinking, creativity, and the overall learning process to ensure these tools support holistic educational development. By conducting comprehensive research into the application of AI in this context, pouako can better harness technology to improve academic writing outcomes for ākonga Māori, ensuring these innovations are both effective and culturally appropriate.

Lastly, the findings brought to light the significance of assessments in the context of academic writing. Although the discussions on this topic were sparse, they indicate its importance and warrant further exploration. Understanding how academic writing skills are assessed is vital for a comprehensive view of the teaching and learning process. The methods and criteria used for assessment can greatly influence teaching strategies and ākonga outcomes, making this a critical area for further investigation. Future research should delve into assessment practices and their impact on ākonga Māori, ensuring that the assessment of academic writing skills aligns with culturally responsive teaching and learning principles. This would provide a more holistic understanding of the educational dynamics and offer insights into improving assessment methods to support ākonga Māori.

## **5.6 Final Summary**

This discussion chapter honours the experiences of ākonga Māori and pouako, revealing critical factors that support and challenge the teaching and learning of academic writing in foundation courses/programmes. It highlights four key areas for enhancement: adopting culturally responsive teaching practices, fostering culturally inclusive and safe learning

environments, incorporating relevant, fun, and interactive learning activities, and providing comprehensive resources. Emphasising the integration of Māori culture into the curriculum and adopting diverse, holistic teaching methods, the research highlights the importance of genuine inclusivity and systemic change to mitigate barriers and racism. While these strategies are focused on supporting ākonga Māori, they are well-positioned to enhance educational outcomes for all ākonga. By contextualising academic learning to ākonga cultural identities and leveraging modern tools like AI responsibly, the study calls for a more balanced approach that respects and enhances Māori cultural identity, fostering an equitable and effective educational environment.

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# Appendix A: Information Sheet for Interviews



## ***A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Māori pre-degree learners.***

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEWS

Tēnā koe,

My name is William Nepia (Waikato-Tainui), and I am a current Master of Education student at the Institute of Education, Massey University. I am inviting you to participate in a research project that I am leading entitled "*A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Maori pre-degree learners.*" This research project is part of my thesis, Master of Education (Tertiary Education), which targets Māori learners in foundation-level tertiary education. Your agreement to take part in this study would be greatly appreciated.

#### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this research is to develop a framework or model that can be used to design a course or series of workshops to support the development of capabilities required for academic writing. This study will draw on staff and learners' perspectives who are involved in pre-degree, foundation certificate programmes that aim to prepare learners for degree-level health studies. In the past three years, there has been an increased number of learners who require additional support in writing for academic purposes. We want to learn from learners (and staff) in their own words about what works best to develop academic writing skills. We intend to use the findings to improve the teaching and learning delivery of academic writing workshops in the Certificate in Health Sciences. The study may also lead to conference presentations and peer-reviewed journal articles.

#### **How were you chosen for this invitation?**

We would like to invite you to participate because you have self-identified as having experience teaching learners academic writing skills in pre-degree foundation certificates. You have also responded to the Expressions of Interest.

#### **If you would like to participate, how do you volunteer?**

If you would like to volunteer, please email [w.nepia@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:w.nepia@auckland.ac.nz). Given that data collection needs to commence before Semester 2, 2021, please express your interest as soon as possible.

We hope you can volunteer to be an interview participant to work closely with to gather in-depth and valuable information. However, suppose the number of volunteers exceeds our target number of

participants. In that case, we will need to select a range of volunteers that best align with this project's intention.

We aim to notify all volunteers of the outcome by 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021. If you are selected, the Participation Consent Form will be emailed to you at that time. You will be asked to read and sign the Consent Form and then return it to the Research team.

**If you participate, what will you need to do?**

We would like you to participate in the project for no more than two hours, including participation in an interview for about 60 minutes and review your transcript for 30-60 minutes. Participants will be asked a series of open-answer questions about their teaching and learning experiences with academic writing. As part of this, we may probe you to provide specific examples when answering questions rather than make general statements. At all times, you may decline to answer a question if you are not comfortable.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Key themes will be drawn from all interviews, and the recording will only be listened to by the principal investigator.

**If you participate, how will your data be managed and stored?**

Recordings and transcripts will be stored securely in password-protected electronic files or kept separately in locked storage at the university for six years, after which they will be destroyed. Participants will be non-identifiable in all reporting of findings from this research.

**If you participate, what are the benefits?**

The greatest benefit of participating is likely to be the activity of self-reflection, which plays an important role in supporting better learning outcomes for Māori learners. The Certificate in Health Sciences programme at the University of Auckland is likely to gather valuable feedback from Māori foundation learners that will be shared among the wider foundation community to help improve the learning experience for future Māori students.

**If you participate, what are the risks of being involved?**

You may feel concerned about being identified via the interview. We want to reassure you that the recordings will remain confidential and only be viewed by the research team members. You are free at any stage to withdraw from the interview or take time out if you wish. However, you will not be able to withdraw your data once the analysis has commenced. The interview is designed to be a supportive environment, and the researcher will ensure all aspects of Kaupapa Māori Research methodological approach is used.

### Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to decline to answer any particular question (or reflect on any specific issue); withdraw from the study at any point (unless the data analysis has commenced); ask any questions about the study at any time during participation; provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher, and be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

### Who else is involved in this research?

The following research members are involved in this study:

**William Nepia (Waikato/Tainui)**  
Massey University Student, Primary Investigator  
Email: [w.nepia@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:w.nepia@auckland.ac.nz)  
Phone: +64 [REDACTED]

**Dr. Pania Te Maro (Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau a Pokai)**  
First Supervisor for thesis/research project  
Associate Director Māori, Pro Vice Chancellor Office Māori  
Senior Lecturer, Institute of Education, Massey University  
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**Dr. Brian Tweed**  
Second Supervisor for thesis/research project  
Senior Lecturer, Institute of Education, Massey University  
Email: [B.Tweed@massey.ac.nz](mailto:B.Tweed@massey.ac.nz)

### Who should you contact for further information about the research?

Should you have any questions, please contact William Nepia.

Ngā mihi,  
William Nepia  
Primary Investigator

***Please include the correct committee approval statement as follows: This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 20/63. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83570, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz).***

# Appendix B: Participant Consent Form



## ***A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Māori pre-degree learners.***

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet attached as Appendix I. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time (unless the data analysis has commenced).

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.
3. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
4. I understand that participation or non-participation will not have an effect on employment or any on-going study with the University of Auckland.

#### Declaration by Participant:

I \_\_\_\_\_ [print full name] \_\_\_\_\_ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix C: Interview Schedule

## *A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Māori pre-degree learners.*

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

#### Aim:

This project aims to develop a framework or model that can be used to design a course or series of workshops to support the development of capabilities required for academic writing.

#### Introduction:

##### *Mihimihī*

The interviewer will formally greet the interviewee/staff in Te Reo Māori language and will introduce themselves with Māori rituals of encounter (eg pepeha) as is consistent with Māori cultural practice; as appropriate to the interview.

##### *Explain the study and that the interview will be recorded.*

This research seeks to examine the successes, challenges, and opportunities of Māori foundation learners and staff to succeed with writing for academic purposes. This information will be used to improve the teaching and learning delivery of academic writing workshops in the Certificate in Health Sciences programme.

You are eligible to participate because you have self-identified as having experience teaching learners academic writing skills in pre-degree foundation certificates and have responded to the Expressions of Interest. Participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time, up until the interview starts.

This interview will take approximately 60 minutes of your time and will be voice recorded today and then will be transcribed word-for-word at a later date. The recording can be turned off during the interview if you do not wish your answers to be recorded or transcribed. You do not need to state a reason for doing so.

This interview and the discussions held today are confidential.

##### *Obtain consent*

Before we go any further, we need to get your consent, *hand out consent forms*. Please read these forms carefully and sign at the bottom. If you have any questions, the interviewer will answer them to the best of their ability. If you do not consent to any of the items listed on the form, the interview will not proceed.

##### *Explain the agenda*

The hour will be made up of open-answer questions. As part of this, we may probe you to provide specific examples when answering questions rather than general statements. At all times, you may decline to answer a question if you are not comfortable.

##### *Quick introductions*

Invite the participants to introduce themselves.

##### *Karakia*

TBD, facilitator to lead.

## Questions

### A: *General views*

What capabilities do you believe students need to have to be successful with their studies, particularly in respect to academic writing?

How do you develop these capabilities in your courses?

What are the principles and practices that underpin effective capability development?

Which practices are most effective?

Which practices are least effective?

Check for:

- categories of students
- progressive development mechanisms
- teaching mechanisms
- assessment devices

### B: *Practice*

How do you, as a teaching staff member, currently support the development of academic writing skills?

Reflecting on your practice, what do you do well, how do you know, what would you like to do more of or better?

What support/learning/theories have you drawn on to develop these capabilities?

What aspects are most effective?

What aspects are the least effective?

Can you identify specific practices that may be beneficial for Māori, pre-degree learners?

## Conclusion

*Thank interviewee/staff for their participation*

Thank you for participating in this interview today. Your answers will help shape and improve the teaching and delivery of academic writing workshops in the Certificate in Health Sciences programme at the University of Auckland.

# Appendix D: Information Sheet for Focus Group



## ***A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Māori pre-degree learners.***

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR FOCUS GROUP

**Tēnā koe,**

My name is William Nepia (Waikato-Tainui), and I am a current Master of Education student at the Institute of Education, Massey University. I am inviting you to participate in a research project that I am leading entitled ***"A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Māori pre-degree learners."*** This research project is part of my thesis, Master of Education (Tertiary Education), which targets Māori learners in foundation-level tertiary education. Your agreement to take part in this study would be greatly appreciated.

#### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this research is to develop a framework or model that can be used to design a course or series of workshops to support the development of capabilities required for academic writing. This study will draw on staff and learners' perspectives who are involved in pre-degree, foundation certificate programmes that aim to prepare learners for degree-level health studies. In the past three years, there has been an increased number of learners who require additional support in writing for academic purposes. We want to learn from learners (and staff) in their own words about what works best to develop academic writing skills. We intend to use the findings to improve the teaching and learning delivery of academic writing workshops in the Certificate in Health Sciences. The study may also lead to conference presentations and peer-reviewed journal articles.

#### **How were you chosen for this invitation?**

We would like to invite you to participate because you have self-identified as a Māori learner who is formally enrolled in the Certificate in Health Sciences programme at the University of Auckland in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

#### **If you would like to participate, how do you volunteer?**

If you would like to volunteer, please email [w.nepia@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:w.nepia@auckland.ac.nz). Given that data collection needs to commence before Semester 2, 2021, please express your interest as soon as possible.

We hope you can volunteer to be one of a small group of 5-8 participants to work closely with to gather in-depth and valuable information. However, suppose the number of volunteers exceeds our target

number of participants. In that case, we will need to select a range of volunteers representing the diversity of the Māori learners at the University of Auckland.

We aim to notify all volunteers of the outcome by 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021. If you are selected, the Participation Consent Form will be emailed to you at that time. You will be asked to read and sign the Consent Form and then return it to the Research team.

**If you participate, what will you need to do?**

We would like you to participate in the project for no more than two hours. This will involve participation in a focus group for about 1-1.5 hours. Focus group participants will be asked about their experiences and opinions to the following questions:

- What factors support Māori learners to be successful with writing for academic purposes?
- What factors challenge Māori learners to be successful with writing for academic purposes?
- What are the needs of Māori learners in relation to writing for academic purposes?

The focus group will be recorded and transcribed. You will not have the ability to edit this transcription, but can decide to not answer questions that may arise during the focus group. Your responses will be examined by the research team and concepts will be themed to present an overall picture of the needs and factors for Māori students.

**If you participate, how will your data be managed and stored?**

Recordings and transcripts will be stored securely in password-protected electronic files or kept separately in locked storage at the university for six years, after which they will be destroyed. By nature, focus groups prevent anonymity within the group and make it difficult for individual participants to withdraw information once it is provided. You will not be able to withdraw your data once the data analysis has commenced. It is also difficult to return the recording or transcript as it will include input from others. Confidentiality of all information shared within the group is expected. Participants will be non-identifiable in all reporting of findings from this research.

**If you participate, what are the benefits?**

The greatest benefit of participating is likely to be self-reflection, which plays an important role in supporting better learning outcomes for Māori learners. The Certificate in Health Sciences programme at the University of Auckland is likely to gather valuable feedback from Māori foundation learners that will be shared among the wider foundation community to help improve the learning experience for future Māori students.

**If you participate, what are the risks of being involved?**

You may feel concerned about being identified via the focus group. For example, you might be concerned that participation will influence your relationship with academic staff and/or grades in your enrolled courses. There is no risk that your participation in this study will affect your relationship with academic staff or grades in the courses you are studying. We want to reassure you that the recordings

will remain confidential and only be viewed by the research team members. You are free at any stage to withdraw from the focus group or take time out if you wish. The interview is designed to be a supportive environment, and the researcher will ensure all aspects of Kaupapa Māori Research methodological approach is used.

#### Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to decline to answer any particular question (or reflect on any specific issue); withdraw from the study at any point (unless the data analysis has commenced); ask any questions about the study at any time during participation; provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher, and be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

#### Who else is involved in this research?

The following research members are involved in this study:

##### William Nepia (Waikato/Tainui)

Massey University Student, Primary Investigator

Email: [w.nepia@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:w.nepia@auckland.ac.nz)

Phone: +64 [REDACTED]

##### Dr. Pania Te Maro (Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau a Pokai)

First Supervisor for thesis/research project

Associate Director Māori, Pro Vice Chancellor Office Māori

Senior Lecturer, Institute of Education, Massey University

Email: [p.temaro@massey.ac.nz](mailto:p.temaro@massey.ac.nz)

##### Dr. Brian Tweed

Second Supervisor for thesis/research project

Senior Lecturer, Institute of Education, Massey University

Email: [B.Tweed@massey.ac.nz](mailto:B.Tweed@massey.ac.nz)

#### Who should you contact for further information about the research?

Should you have any questions, please contact William Nepia.

Ngā mihi,

William Nepia

Primary Investigator

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 20/63. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83570, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz).*

# Appendix E: Focus Group Participant Consent Form



## ***A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Māori pre-degree learners.***

### FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet attached as Appendix 1. I have had the details of the study explained to me, my questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time (unless the data analysis has commenced).

1. I understand that I have an obligation to respect the privacy of the other members of the group by not disclosing any personal information that they share during our discussion.
2. I understand that all the information I provide will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law, and the names of all people in the study will be kept confidential by the researcher.

*Note: There are limits on confidentiality as there are no formal sanctions on other group participants from disclosing your involvement, identity or what you say to others in the focus group. There are risks in taking part in focus group research and taking part assumes that you are willing to assume those risks.*

3. I understand that the focus group recording and transcript will not be returned to me as it will include input from other participants.
4. I understand that participation or non-participation will not have an effect on employment or any on-going study with the University of Auckland.
5. I agree to participate in the focus group under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet attached as Appendix 2.

#### Declaration by Participant:

I \_\_\_\_\_ [print full name] \_\_\_\_\_ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix F: Focus Group Schedule

## *A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Māori pre-degree learners.*

### FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

#### Aim:

This project aims to develop a framework or model that can be used to design a course or series of workshops to support the development of capabilities required for academic writing.

#### Introduction:

##### *Mihimihī*

The facilitator will formally welcome the focus group participants in Te Reo Māori language and will introduce themselves with Māori rituals of encounter (eg pepeha) as is consistent with Māori cultural practice; as appropriate to the focus group participant base.

##### *Explain the study and that the focus group will be recorded.*

This research seeks to examine the successes, challenges and opportunities of Māori foundation learners to be successful with writing for academic purposes. This information will be used to improve the teaching and learning delivery of academic writing workshops in the Certificate in Health Sciences programme.

You are eligible to participate because you have self-identified as Māori and are a current or former Certificate in Health Sciences learner and because you have responded to the Expressions of Interest/advertisement. Participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time, up until the focus group starts.

This focus group will take approximately 2 hours of your time and is going to be voice recorded today and then will be transcribed word-for-word at a later date. The recording will not be turned off during the focus group, if you do not wish for your answers to be recorded or transcribed you can decide to not answer a question. You do not need to state a reason for doing so.

This focus group, and the discussions held today are confidential and are not to be discussed outside of this room. The questions we ask today may bring up feelings of discomfort, embarrassment or psychological issues, you may ask to be referred to Student Health and Counselling Services following the focus group.

##### *Obtain consent*

Before we go any further, we need to get your consent, *hand out consent forms*. Please read these forms carefully and sign at the bottom. If you have any questions, the focus group facilitator will answer them to the best of their ability. If you do not consent to any of the items listed on the form, please exit the room.

##### *Explain the agenda*

The next hour to hour and half will be made up of open-answer questions, everyone will be allowed a chance to speak and we hope that you feel comfortable to speak freely in this environment. As part of this we may probe you to provide specific examples when answering questions rather than make general statements, at all times you may decline to answer a question if you are not comfortable.

##### *Quick introductions*

Invite the participants to introduce themselves.

*Karakia*

TBD, facilitator to lead.

*Kai/refreshments*

Invite the participants to help themselves.

**Questions (1 hour- 1.5hours)**

*The focus group questions*

What factors support Māori learners to be successful with writing for academic purposes?

What factors challenge Māori learners to be successful with writing for academic purposes?

What are the needs of Māori learners in relation to writing for academic purposes?

**Conclusion**

*Thank learners for their participation*

Thank you for participating in this focus group today. Your answers will help shape and improve the teaching and delivery of academic writing workshops in the Certificate in Health Sciences programme at the University of Auckland.

We understand that the discussions as part of this focus group may have brought up feelings of discomfort, embarrassment or psychological issues, and so please let us know if you would like to have a confidential discussion of any feelings of discomfort, embarrassment or psychological issues with Student Health and Counselling. If you have any further questions about this research do not hesitate to contact a member of the research team as outlined on the form.

# Appendix G: Ethics Approval



Date: 04 May 2021

Dear William Nepia

Re: Ethics Notification - SOB 20/63 - A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Maori pre-degree learners

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Human Ethics Southern B Committee at their meeting held on Tuesday, 4 May, 2021.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Professor Craig Johnson  
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

# Appendix H: Waipapa Taumata Rau/The University of Auckland Consent



## ***A teaching and learning model to support the development of academic writing capabilities of Māori pre-degree learners.***

CONSENT FORM FOR DIRECTOR OF CERTIFICATE IN HEALTH SCIENCES/  
MĀORI AND PACIFIC ADMISSION SCHEME

I have read or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet attached as Appendix 2. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I understand the nature of the research is that it is focused on the teaching of writing for academic purposes with Māori students recently graduated from the Certificate in Health Sciences programme. This research will require learners to participate in a focus group for approximately 1.5 hours. I understand how information will be collected. I understand that learners may be voluntary participants in all aspects of this research.

- I agree to allow students to be told about this research.
- I understand that in the reporting of this research, participant identity will be strictly confidential, and all information will only be used for the purpose of this research.
- I understand that participation is completely voluntary and nobody will be forced to take part.
- I understand that the participant can withdraw from the focus group at any time whilst it is being conducted.
- I confirm that neither grades nor academic relationships with the school, department or members of the staff will be affected by either refusal or agreement to participate.
- I understand that the data will be stored for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I understand that the research findings may be used for conference/seminar presentations and papers.
- I understand that due to the nature of the focus group individual participants will not be able to withdraw individual focus group data once it has been given.



**Declaration by Director:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ [print full name]\_\_\_\_\_ hereby consent to the above statements.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_