



Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa

New Zealand Drama School

Policy Document Name	Academic and Student Policy
Policy Document Description	This policy frames the selection, enrolment, and academic progression of taura (students)
Policy Applies to	<input type="checkbox"/> Trustees <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kaimahi <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taura <input type="checkbox"/> Manuhiri
Link to related procedures document	N/A

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Approval Authority	Te Pae Pākaha, Academic Board
Governing Authority	Te Pae Marautanga, Curriculum Committee
Responsible Officers	Te Tira Pākaha, Academic Leadership Team
Review Cycle	Every three years
Next Review Due	4 February 2029

Relevant legislation, policies, procedures, forms, guidelines and protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Training Act 2020 • The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 • NZQA Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2026 • Privacy Act 2020 • Official Information Act 1982 • Disciplinary and Grievance Resolution Policy • Programme Review Policy • Assessment and Moderation Policy
Important notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is acknowledged that at no time should any Toi Whakaari policy document contravene: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Te Tiriti o Waitangi; and/or ○ Central and local government laws and common law; and/or ○ The Trust Deed of Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa. • Policies and Procedures continue in force until such time as they are replaced or rescinded. • Feedback on policy and procedure is welcomed and can be submitted by email to policy.review@toiwhakaari.ac.nz

Revision number	02
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Revision notes	Updates reflect outcome of latest 3-yearly review

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the selection, enrolment, and academic progression of taura in ways that are fair, transparent, and culturally responsive, supporting taura to succeed while upholding academic standards, collective responsibility, and the values of Toi Whakaari.

Admission Requirements

Entry to the School does not require formal qualification pre-requisites for admission to study on the following degree/diploma programmes:

- Bachelor of Performing Arts with endorsements in Acting, Production, Design, and Creative Performance Practice
- NZ Diploma in Scenic Construction and Properties
- NZ Diploma in Costume Construction

Entry to the Master of Creative Performance Practice is via application and interview.

Selection of Students

Undergraduate Programmes

All applicants must participate in a standard selection process, as determined by each Department, before an offer of place can be made.

Applicants will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Student admission numbers for any programme will be determined by Tira Mana Kōkiri, Senior Leadership Team, in conversation with the Kaiārahi Rēhita, Registrar, and Tira Pākaha, Academic Leadership Team.

The number of taura admitted to a programme of study in any year is determined by the funding arrangements of the kura with the Tertiary Education Commission (“TEC”). These decisions take into account the resource and ability of the kura to deliver the programme to a desired standard.

Postgraduate Programmes

All applicants for the Master of Creative Performance Practice will be considered by an approvals committee which consists of the course coordinator and up to 4 appropriate academic staff to be appointed annually by the Tumuaki, Director or other designated senior academic leader. Applicants will be considered on the basis of eligibility for the programme, sufficient evidence of creative practice, appropriate area of focus, and the kura’s capacity to provide adequate supervision for their desired study. Toi Whakaari will seek to maintain transparency, providing feedback to all applicants throughout the process.

Procedure

The selection process will be determined by the Tira Pākaha.

The selection process should be designed, to the best of its ability, to reveal and assess the expectations and aspirations, language proficiency, and academic potential of prospective students to engage in study and that these attributes are appropriate for the intended programme of study at the level required.

In making an offer of a place to study there should be a realistic expectation that the student would succeed on the programme.

The Tira Pākaha will appoint a selection panel consisting of relevant staff and suitably qualified industry practitioners, where appropriate.

This selection process involves a review of adequate student application documentation and may include, but is not exclusive to, any of the following:

- participation in a selection workshop
- solo or group audition
- interview: face-to-face or mediated through other modes of communication
- review of academic records, personal statements, and supplied or elicited references
- medical examination or completion of a medical questionnaire
- observation of live student work, prepared work on video, or submitted portfolios
- assessment of English language ability

The Manutaki, in consultation with the selection panel, will provide a list of candidates to whom will be sent an offer of place. A short list may also be drawn up if initial offers of place are not taken up.

In the event of a dispute over admission numbers, or the inclusion or exclusion of a candidate or candidates for an offer of place, the Manutaki will present the case to the Tira Pākaha at which a consensus resolution will be reached.

Enrolment Age Restriction

Tauira who have not attained the age of 18 years prior to the first day of their chosen course of study cannot be enrolled at the kura.

In exceptional circumstances an exemption to this age restriction may be granted. Exemptions will be granted by the Academic Board.

Possible reasons for an exemption might include:

- an applicant nearing their 18th birthday,
- an applicant who has extensive industry experience and/or strong pastoral support to enter the programme of learning.

Procedure

Where an exemption is sought, the relevant Manutaki will make a written recommendation to the Poukōkiri Mātauranga, Academic Director to request an Age Restriction Exemption for a student. This exemption must be granted before an offer of place is made.

The decision of the Poukōkiri Mātauranga to support or decline the departmental recommendation will be proposed to the Academic Board who will review the documents and make a final and binding decision regarding an offer of place, in a timely manner to meet the required deadlines for enrolment into the relevant course.

International Students

In terms of the Education and Training Act 2020, an international student is defined as any person who is enrolled in study and is not a domestic student. Domestic students are citizens or permanent residents of New Zealand or Australia, or a citizen of the Cook Islands, Tokelau, or Niue.

Toi Whakaari is a signatory to the [Education \(Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners\) Code of Practice 2021](#).

Admission Requirements

Entry to the kura requires that international students have:

- achieved the age of 18 years by the first day of study of their elected programme of study. In exceptional circumstances an exemption to this age restriction may be granted. The procedure for applying for an exemption to this requirement is set out above.
- achieved a level of proficiency in the English language (the language of tuition delivery) as set out in the NZQA Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2026.

Selection of International Students

International students are required to participate in an equivalent selection process to that required of domestic students before an offer of place can be made. Modification to the components of the selection procedure may be required in acknowledgement that some international students will participate in the process, of necessity, at a distance.

International students will be required to achieve the same admission standards for entry as those required of domestic students.

Admission of international students to study at the School is on the basis that they are not taking a place that would otherwise be available to a domestic student [Education and Training Act 2020, 525(3)].

Deferrals

Deferral of commencement of study for new students

Toi Whakaari does not grant deferrals of commencement of study to new students once an offer of place has been received. If a candidate is unable to take up the offer, then they must reapply under the same process as other candidates for entry the following year.

Deferral after commencement of study

Deferrals after commencement of study will not be granted automatically and requests for deferral will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the relevant Manutaki and the Tira Pākaha.

Procedure

A taura wishing to defer after the commencement of study on a particular course must make a written request to the Manutaki or Kaiārahi Whakapūmau. The request will be duly considered, and a written recommendation submitted to the Poukōkiri Mātauranga.

In this recommendation the Manutaki or departmental representative will outline any conditions he/she believes are reasonably necessary for the taura to fulfil to continue the deferred course of study.

The Poukōkiri Mātauranga will inform the taura, in writing, of the decision, including any conditions, no later than 10 working days after the request for deferral has been made.

The decision of the Poukōkiri Mātauranga will be final with no recourse to appeal. A copy of all correspondence will be kept on the file of the taura.

A deferral will be granted for a maximum period of 12 months ONLY. Continuation of study must be taken up no more than 12 months after date of withdrawal. The taura will undergo the normal Withdrawal and Exit Procedure and will be informed of the future start date for the course of study as soon as this has been set.

If a taura accepts an offer of deferral they will be required to confirm to the kura, in writing, their intention to re-commence study at least three months prior to the specified starting date. Failure to do so may result in the deferral being withdrawn. If the Poukōkiri Mātauranga considers that the student has fulfilled all conditions detailed in the deferral offer, they will accept the request of the taura to re-commence study. Normal enrolment procedures will follow. In this matter the decision of the Poukōkiri Mātauranga will be final with no recourse to appeal.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process that involves formal assessment of the relevant and current knowledge and skills (gained through prior learning) of a taura to determine achievement of learning outcomes of a qualification for the purpose of awarding credit towards that qualification.

The Academic Board, on the recommendation of the Poukōkiri Mātauranga, may grant Recognition of Prior Learning for entry into the following qualifications:

- Bachelor of Performing Arts with endorsements in Production, Design, or Creative Performance Practice
- NZ Diploma in Scenic Construction and Properties
- NZ Diploma in Costume Construction

Recognition of Prior Learning for entry into the Bachelor of Performing Arts (with endorsement in Acting) may be considered on a case-by-case basis, and may be granted only under exceptional circumstances.

Procedure

As well as participating in the standard selection process determined by each department, a prospective taura seeking Recognition of Prior Learning should also forward a written request to the relevant Manutaki or a nominated departmental representative for consideration.

Requests must be made prior to commencement of study on the specific qualification programme. NO retrospective requests will be considered.

This request must include all supporting documentation with evidence of the applicant's relevant academic or industry experience, and current competency.

The Manutaki or departmental representative will make a written recommendation to the Poukōkiri Mātauranga that includes any specific conditions for the Recognition of Prior Learning to be granted.

The Poukōkiri Mātauranga will review all documentation and determine whether to support or deny the departmental recommendation. This will be submitted to the Academic Board in a timely manner in order to meet the required deadlines for enrolment into the relevant course the Academic Board will make a final decision with no recourse to appeal.

Credit Recognition and Transfer

NZQA describes Credit Recognition and Transfer (CRT) as a process where credit for outcomes already achieved by a taura through formal study in relation to a qualification is recognised as credit for comparable outcomes in another qualification. This formal study may have been completed at the kura or at an external institution.

The Academic Board, on the recommendation of the Poukōkiri Mātauranga, may grant Credit Recognition and Transfer for entry into the following qualifications:

- Bachelor of Performing Arts with endorsements in Production, Design, or Creative Performance Practice
- NZ Diploma in Scenic Construction and Properties
- NZ Diploma in Costume Construction

Procedure

As well as participating in the standard selection process determined by each department, a prospective taura seeking Credit Recognition and Transfer should forward a written request to the relevant Manutaki or a nominated departmental representative for consideration.

Requests must be made prior to commencement of study on the specific qualification programme. NO retrospective requests will be considered.

This request must include all supporting documentation with evidence of the applicant's relevant academic achievement.

The Manutaki or departmental representative will make a written recommendation to the Poukōkiri Mātauranga that notes:

- What components of the previous formal study is comparable with the components of the course offered by the School
- What gaps in learning or experience may be present and provide solutions on how to fill them

The Poukōkiri Mātauranga will review all documentation and determine whether to support or deny the departmental recommendation. This will be submitted to the Academic Board in a timely manner in order to meet the required deadlines for enrolment into the relevant course.

The Academic Board will make a final decision with no recourse to appeal.

Enrolment

Enrolment procedures are completed following an applicant accepting an offer of place.

Tauira will be required to enrol in a specific qualification study programme upon acceptance of the offer of place, and thereafter re-enrol annually in the relevant programme of study for that qualification.

Procedure

An offer of place is made to applicants by the Kaiārahi Rēhita or designated representative from the relevant qualification programme, upon completion of the programme specific selection process. Applicants will be required to accept or decline this offer of place in writing.

By accepting an offer of place, the tauira agrees to abide by the policy and procedures of the kura and becomes liable for payment of fees by the due date. A deadline for receiving notification of acceptance will be set each year in relation to programme delivery commencement dates.

Each year, programme enrolment documentation must be completed prior to the commencement of programme delivery.

During enrolment, all tauira are required to sign the Tuition Agreement prior to commencement of study. The Tuition Agreement will be provided with enrolment documentation prior to commencement of programme delivery each year. Signed Tuition Agreements will be filed in the personal file of each tauira.

Tauira Learning Contract

Expectations of Tauira

Attendance and Absence

Absenteeism severely disadvantages students from maximising their learning and is viewed with concern by the School. The absence, or lateness, of one student impacts on the work of all students in the group. School performances, productions, exhibitions, presentations, and showcases are the equivalent of examinations in other tertiary institutions.

It is expected that students:

- attend all timetabled classes on time, including Hui a Kura, rehearsals, performances, workshops and presentations
- attend additional specified events when required
- comply with any specific attendance requirements in relation to particular projects or productions
- be punctual at all times
- take responsibility for checking the displayed timetables and emails daily

Failure to attend and unexplained or prolonged absence will result in Departmental Disciplinary Procedures being implemented (see Discipline section)

Unexplained and unsanctioned absence or lateness may affect a tauira assessment. It is the responsibility of the tauira to ensure they catch up on work missed due to absence, in consultation with the supervising Kaitātaki or Manutaki.

Unanticipated Absence and Lateness

If a tauira is absent for any reason, they must follow the relevant procedures as set out in the *Welcome to Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School* Canvas page for notifying the kura of their absence.

Tauira are required to notify the School as soon as practically possible, of lateness, illness, injury, or other circumstances requiring absence from scheduled classes. Tauira absence and lateness will be recorded. Lateness may result in exclusion from class and any tauira excluded for lateness will be marked as absent.

Any other specific departmental procedures for reporting absence will be notified by tutorial or administrative staff during the first week study at the kura usually through information contained in Canvas. Tauira are expected to explain any absence to all relevant Kaitātaki and arrange to make up the missed work.

If a tauira is physically unable to participate actively in a class they should try, public health issues being taken into consideration, and sit in on the class if possible.

For a regular illness or injury, a taura who is absent for more than three consecutive days must present a medical certificate or equivalent as soon as possible. For public health issues, the student should notify the kura of their situation and follow all Ministry of Health advice relevant to that situation. If a taura has an unexplained absence for three consecutive days or more, they will be required to attend a meeting with their Manutaki and agree on an Ako Plan before returning to regular classes.

Anticipated Absence

Taura needing anticipated leave of absence must request a formal Leave of Absence in advance, from the appropriate Manutaki, prior to the leave being taken. Leave Forms are provided for making such requests.

The Manutaki will reasonably consider the request and decline or grant it subject to conditions. In circumstances where a taura feels that a request for leave has been unreasonably withheld they may appeal to the Poukōkiri Mātauranga, whose decision will be final.

Leave subsequently taken that has not been granted will adversely affect the academic progress of the taura and may invoke Departmental Disciplinary Procedures being implemented (see Discipline section).

In the event of serious or long-term sickness or injury, or other circumstances requiring a long-term leave of absence, a taura must receive approval from the Manutaki and the Poukōkiri Mātauranga. If leave is granted, taura must comply with any prescribed requirements for completing missed work.

A taura must immediately declare any health issues, which may affect on-going participation in their programme, to a Kaitātaki or Manutaki.

Academic Progression

Progression during an academic year

Tauira should ensure that they attempt all assignments across the year.

Progression through the academic year is dependent upon a tauira successfully completing all units/assessments each term. Failing to successfully complete any assessment has implications for the Tauira Learning Contract and will result in their inability to progress academically.

In the case where a tauira is failing and will be unable to progress, the kura may require them to withdrawal from the course prior to the completion of the academic year.

Progression into a subsequent year of study or graduation

Progression into a subsequent year of study or progression to graduation is not automatic. Tauira must have successfully completed all courses within a programme year in order to progress into the next year.

Progress Meetings

Tauira concerned about their academic progress should, in the first instance, speak to their Kaitātaki or Manutaki. Tauira are advised to use their one-on-one progress meetings to ensure that they are fully aware of any problems that might result in non-completion later.

Procedure

A tauira who fails an assessment should, in the first instance, speak to the relevant Kaitātaki or Manutaki.

A meeting with their Manutaki and the Kaiārahi Rēhita will be held to discuss the implications and options on future academic study at the kura. Tauira are entitled to bring a support person with them to this meeting if they wish.

The outcome of this meeting will be to ascertain the best course of action for the tauira and the kura. Outcomes may include that:

- a proposal to re-take unit(s) is made;
- the tauira decides to withdraw from study; or
- the kura may withdraw the place of the tauira at the kura.

The kura may impose conditions on any option to return to study. The tauira will be informed in writing of the result of this meeting, including any conditions applied.

If a tauira is granted the option to return to study a place will be held for them on the appropriate course of study for the following year.

In the case of a first year taura who wishes the option to return to study be deferred for a year or more their place may not be guaranteed, and they may be required to go through the application process again for the year they wish to return in.

If a taura is unhappy with the outcome of these processes, they may address their complaint to the school via the grievance procedures outlined in the Assessment and Moderation Policy.

Access to teaching staff

The kura provides regular opportunities for taura to meet with teaching staff in order to:

- receive clarification of the curriculum, course requirements, assessment tasks and general learning questions
- receive feedback and assessment of their progress in meeting course requirements
- understand all relevant School procedures
- to advise of personal issues which may be affecting learning

Procedure

Taura will be provided with course timetables. Kaitātaki will provide support and guidance appropriate to the method of delivery for each course of study so that taura can plan their learning programme to achieve their learning goals. Taura can approach teaching staff within working hours to request an appointment.

Wherever possible, staff will deal with the request within twenty-four (24) hours. No taura should have to wait more than seven days for an appointment.

Taura can approach the Kaiārahi Rēhita or Poukōkiri Mātauranga for an appointment at any time. The same timelines will apply as for other staff member appointments.

Teaching and Delivery

The teaching approach at Toi Whakaari reflects the strategic direction of the kura.

Procedure

The commitment of the kura to respect, preserve and enhance teaching and the taura learning experience is demonstrated through:

- The appointment of appropriately qualified staff to deliver discipline specific programmes
- The provision of student supports necessary to meet the requirements of the teaching and learning process irrespective of mode of study
- Publishing and making available to each taura curriculum documentation in a timely manner. This will include:
 - Course Outlines
 - Graduate Profiles
 - Timetable
 - Assessment information
 - Expectations of taura
- Providing task or project specific
 - Learning Outcomes
 - Assessment Criteria
- Ongoing review and revision of programme content and delivery based on peer-review and including input from taura, internal and external experts, and appropriate national and international monitoring processes
- Facilitating access for taura to appropriate pastoral care, academic advice, infrastructure facilities and services, and student learning support.

Course Evaluation

Ongoing review of curriculum documentation and course delivery will be conducted within each programme, in consultation with stakeholders, in line with New Zealand Qualifications Authority guidelines and requirements. Annual internal and external monitoring processes are in place to evaluate the delivery of programmes.

Taura evaluation of their course provides essential information for teaching staff, Tira Pākaha, Tira Mana Kōkiri, the Academic board, independent auditors, resource managers and administrators regarding such matters as:

- Effectiveness of delivery
- Relevance of curriculum content
- Departmental resources
- Facility resources
- Overall student satisfaction

Procedure

Taura evaluation will be collected and reviewed regularly. Feedback from taura is organised, administered, analysed, and evaluated by each department, then reported through the Curriculum Committee to the Academic Board.

Internal review and external independent audits of evaluation processes are carried out in accordance with NZQA requirements. Annual monitoring and reporting on the quality of delivery of undergraduate programmes is completed by an approved external monitor. The degree monitor's recommendations are reviewed and actioned by staff, and the Curriculum Committee before being reported to the Academic Board.

At mid-year, surveys of the student body are conducted to request feedback on administrative systems, infrastructure and resources provided for their learning. These are organised, analysed, and reported on by the Kaiārahi Rēhita.

Taura have representation at governance level on the sub committees of the Board of Trustees: Engagement Committee, People, Plant and Risk Committee, Health and Safety Committee, and the Academic Board. Taura sub-committee representatives are elected by the student body.

Ongoing review of programmes and course delivery is carried out through evaluation and feedback from relevant stakeholders, and at meetings of the following groups:

- Teaching Staff
- Learning Centre Staff
- Industry Advisory Panels and/or Industry Professionals
- Curriculum Committee
- Tira Pākaha
- Academic Board

Developing new programmes

In developing new programmes, the kura will ensure that the programmes are based on the needs of tauira and other stakeholders, and incorporate the requirements of funding and standard-setting bodies. New programmes must follow the procedures and requirements as set out by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

Procedure

In developing new programmes, a proposal will be examined in the light of the strategic direction of the kura as articulated in the Strategic Plan.

The aims of the proposed programme or change of programme, will be clearly articulated, and discussed as appropriate with:

- Staff teams
- Tauira involved
- the Curriculum Committee
- Tira Pākaha
- Academic Board
- Board of Trustees

All current NZQA Accreditation and Approval processes will be followed.

The programme proposal or changes to an existing programme, will then be submitted to NZQA and/or other qualifying bodies for approval.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

The Academic and Student Policy will be monitored by the Academic Board, and is reviewed at least triennially by the Curriculum Committee and the Academic Board.

This version of the Academic and Student Policy was submitted to, and approved by the Toi Whakaari Academic Board on 4 February 2026.

For review before January 2029.