



Te Whatu
Kairangi

Aotearoa Tertiary
Educator Awards

Procedures, Guidelines & Criteria 2025



We're here to help

The guidelines include information on award eligibility, the nomination process and portfolio requirements.

A helpful checklist is included at the end of this booklet.

There are other resources and people to give assistance and answer questions. Please contact us (see Enquiries in section 6 of this booklet).

Deadline for nominations and portfolios is 5:00pm, Friday 27 June 2025.

Go to www.ako.ac.nz/te-whatu-kairangi for all information.



Image front cover: 2024 Te Whatu Kairangi awardees gathered with the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills, Hon Penny Simmonds (seated centre) at the Parliament ceremony on 4 November

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2024 Te Whatu Kairangi awardees



1 General information

1.1 Background to the awards

The awards were first established in 2001 to celebrate outstanding educators who have made significant impacts on learners and their communities. The awards have grown to be one of the most well recognised and respected tertiary education award programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Awards were redeveloped in 2022 based on a review that included a literature review, an international scan of award systems and stakeholder feedback. The new awards aim to be more inclusive of celebrating the diversity of Aotearoa's best tertiary educators, to help build educational capability, and to align with Government priorities more closely for the tertiary sector. The awards now include the Kaupapa Māori award, the Le Moana Mua award, the Te Tohu Reo Māori award and the General award with individual and group criteria.

Ako Aotearoa encourages nominations from any tertiary education and training organisation that receives Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding. This includes Adult and Community Education, Private Training Establishments, Te Pūkenga (including Institutes of Technology/ Polytechnics and Transitional Industry Training Organisations), Universities, Wānanga, and other Tertiary Education Providers.

The awards panel ('the panel') advises on the criteria, assesses each portfolio against the criteria, and recommends award recipients to the Minister of Education.

For consistency, the term 'educator' is used throughout these guidelines. Other terms such as teacher, facilitator, kaiako, assessor, trainer/employer, lecturer, tutor, mentor, and course leader are also valid, depending on the learning and teaching context. 'Learner' is used here, but other terms such as student, trainee, apprentice, ākonga, client, candidate, and course member are also valid.

A highlight of the awards is the process of writing the portfolio. This is valuable as it helps the nominee to think about their practice. It is a way to think carefully about what they do and how they do it. The nominee can assess the information they have and identify areas that can be developed. The nominee's practice can be further strengthened by gaining high-level feedback on the portfolio from colleagues and others.

1.2 Key changes in 2025

The 2025 guidelines and criteria will consolidate the recent changes that aim to make the awards more accessible to all educators from across New Zealand's tertiary education and training sector. There have been minor changes in the guidelines. The main change is about the number of nominations an organisation can make (see section 2.1a). This will allow an organisation to submit a Le Moana Mua nomination in addition to the current limit of four nominations.

1.3 The awards

Awards of \$20,000 are awarded for a group award and \$15,000 for an individual award, with provision for:

- a) two or more Kaupapa Māori Awards.
- b) two or more Le Moana Mua Awards.
- c) one Te Tohu Reo Māori Award. This award has a nomination process and criteria that are different from the other awards. These are described in section 4.
- d) one Prime Minister’s Educator of the Year Award (with an additional \$10,000 grant), awarded to the nominee or group whose portfolio the panel agrees best exemplifies the overall criteria.

1.4 Eligibility for nomination

All New Zealand tertiary education organisations receiving funding from the TEC are eligible to nominate educators or groups for the awards. Nominations may be made for the General, Kaupapa Māori or the Le Moana Mua Awards.

Nominees must meet all the following eligibility requirements to be considered for an award:

- a) Nominations must be submitted and endorsed by the nominee’s organisation.
- b) Nominees must have been working in education, in New Zealand tertiary education organisations, for a minimum period of four years equivalent full-time.
- c) Part-time educators may be nominated if their aggregated working time totals at least four years. See 1.1 for explanation of the term ‘educator’ used in these guidelines.
- d) Previous awardees may be renominated after a further six years. They must signal that they have previously received an award.

1.5 Group nominations

Groups are eligible for the awards. A group will be a minimum of two members and a maximum of eight members.

The Group leader and at least one other must meet the requirements in section 1.4.

For Kaupapa Māori and Le Moana Mua awards the criteria are the same for individuals and groups. For General awards nominees should use either the individual or group criteria. The General Group nominations should use the group criteria.

Summary of the types of awards

	Individual Nomination	Group Nomination
Type of award	General Individual Section 3.1.2	General Group Section 3.1.3
	Kaupapa Māori – Section 3.2	
	Le Moana Mua – Section 3.3	

2 Nomination process

The nomination process includes the following:

- Nominees must use the Word template that is supplied and follow the instructions in the template. Nominees can include up to ten images in the template.
- The word limit is 4,500 words.
- Te reo Māori nominations are welcome.
- The Nomination Form requests that learner representative bodies support the nomination.
- The deadline for the receipt of nominations is 5:00pm, Friday 27 June 2025.

2.1 Nominations

- a) Any tertiary education organisation (see 1.4) may submit up to four nominations, with no more than three for the General Award. In addition, organisations can submit an additional nomination for Le Moana Mua. As Te Pūkenga transitions to regional decision-making institutions, each institution will be classified as an organisation.
- b) Nominations can ONLY be submitted through the nominee's organisation. The Association of Pasifika Staff in Tertiary Education (APSTE) can recommend Le Moana Mua Award nominees with agreement from the nominee's employer.
- c) The CEO/Tumuaki/VC (or equivalent) of the organisation must agree with the nomination for each nominee. The nomination form will request confirmation that the nominee meets the eligibility requirements, the portfolio addresses the chosen criteria, and the nomination is supported by a representative sample of learner feedback. The Nomination Form requests that learner representative bodies should be consulted and should support the nomination.
- d) The Nomination Form should clearly indicate whether the nomination has been submitted for the General, Kaupapa Māori or Le Moana Mua Award. A nomination can only be made under one set of criteria.
- e) The Nomination Form includes a section on the nominee's Tertiary Education History. This must be completed to confirm a minimum of four years education experience in the New Zealand tertiary sector. For groups the leader and at least one other must meet the education history requirements.

2.2 Nominations in te reo Māori

- a) Nominations that are written largely in te reo Māori are welcome.
- b) Te reo Māori nominations will be evaluated by people who are fluent in te reo Māori.
- c) The nominee may provide a translation for all or part of the portfolio if they wish to do so. It will be the te reo Māori that contributes towards the word count and any translated words will not be included in the word count.

Nominations that are largely written in English and have some te reo Māori will be passed to the Kaihautū Mātauranga Māori who will decide if the te reo Māori will need to be translated. Common te reo Māori phrases, mihi whakatau and pepeha would not normally be translated. These nominations will often be reviewed by English speakers. If the nomination is for the Kaupapa Māori Award it will be evaluated by reviewers with a good understanding of Mātauranga Māori, but who will not always be highly fluent in te reo Māori.

2.3 Portfolios

The purpose of the portfolio is for nominees to demonstrate how they meet the criteria, with supporting evidence (see Section 3). The portfolio:

- a) may be prepared by the nominee or by others on behalf of the nominee.
- b) must use the Word template supplied. The template uses the font Calibri at 11 point, 2.54cm margins, and line spacing of 1.5. The headings should be bold. Please do not change the setup of the template or add in extra formatting. Up to ten images can be used in this document. Please do not submit composite images. Captions should be below the image.
- c) should not exceed the equivalent of 4,500 words. The word count includes the words in tables, charts or illustrations that are predominately text, references, and evaluations. Words in photos and images will be counted and added to the word count. Also included in the word count are page headers/footers, short captions, and figures included in diagrams and tables.
- d) can include video and/or audio material to support the nomination and illustrate the criteria. Add text in the portfolio that signposts how the video shows that the criteria are met. We recommend the use of short clips (i.e., individual files for General and Kaupapa Māori nominations should be no more than three minutes in length). Be aware that the total word count, including video/audio material, must not exceed 4,500 words. This means the word count is reduced accordingly, using a formula based on a reduction of 100 words for every 30-second clip (or part thereof) of video and/or audio material. The maximum length of video for Le Moana Mua Award nominations is 17 minutes, which will leave a minimum of 1100 words to write.
- e) should include, within the 4,500-word limit (including video/audio material),
 - (i) a maximum of three formal references (e.g., from learners, peers, employers of former learners, community members) and
 - (ii) a representative sample of learner/course feedback and evaluations from the time period covered by the application.

Citations and summaries of feedback need to be referenced by course title/cohort and year, or other identification relevant to the particular context. To ensure independent verification of evidence, nominees may use their organisation's evaluation and feedback systems, although alternative processes may also be used. If the learning context does not allow for such data collection, this should be outlined in the application.

2.4 Submission of portfolios

Nominations must include:

- a) one electronic copy of a written portfolio using the Microsoft Word template. The Word template includes further instructions. A summary of the word count and/or video and/or audio content viewing/listening time(s) should be included in the template document.
- b) any video or audio files (if applicable) in MP4 and MP3 format respectively.
- c) a completed online form with information about the nominee including an outline of their work as a New Zealand tertiary educator, and the nominators details.

All of the above should be submitted electronically as per the instructions on the Ako Aotearoa website at: ako.ac.nz/te-whatu-kairangi.

Ako Aotearoa will acknowledge receipt of portfolio content via email. All content will be carefully checked to confirm eligibility. Those nominations that do not meet the criteria will not be considered and will therefore be returned to the nominee.

2.5 Deadlines

The deadline for the receipt of nominations is **5.00pm, Friday 27 June 2025**. Late nominations will not be accepted.

2.6 Selection of award recipients

The nominations that meet the requirements set out in sections 1.4 and 2.1 – 2.5 will go through a two-step evaluation process. First, three reviewers will give an initial assessment and then a panel will make the final decision. For Kaupapa Māori nominations in te reo Māori, the reviewers will be fluent in te reo and the panel will have at least one person who is fluent in te reo. The reviewers will have a good understanding of the awards and the education context of the nominee.

The panel members:

- a) are excluded from assessing portfolios from their own current organisation.
- b) must declare in writing any other potential conflicts of interest, which will be considered by the panel and a decision made by the Chair whether to exclude any members from assessing any portfolios.
- c) will evaluate each portfolio against the criteria for the award indicated on the Nomination Form.
- d) reserve the right to seek further clarifying information from nominees if necessary.
- e) reserve the right not to make the full number of awards in any of the categories if there are insufficient nominations that reach the required standard.

The panel's decisions will be full and final, and no correspondence about individual decisions will be entered into with nominees or institutions.

2.7 Responsibilities of award recipients

Awards are granted on the understanding that award recipients:

- a) will use the award money on initiatives that will enhance the recipient's education career, promote good practice and/or benefit learners.
- b) will provide a short report to Ako Aotearoa by 31 March 2026 explaining how the award has or will be used.
- c) are willing to share, present and promote good practice within their own and other organisations.
- d) will be asked to approve a brief article prepared by Ako Aotearoa from their portfolio to be included in the 2025 Awardee Profiles book.

Ako Aotearoa reserves the right to publish extracts from award-winning portfolios online or in print, and to reproduce images from portfolios to use in relation to the awards.

3 Criteria – Kaupapa Māori, Le Moana Mua & General Awards

This section provides information for General Individual, General Group, Kaupapa Māori, and Le Moana Mua awards.

Nominees must describe and provide evidence of how they meet the criteria.

The General Awards now have criteria for individuals and groups, and both require a nomination around a category. The Kaupapa Māori and Le Moana Mua awards can be for individuals or groups.

3.1 General Award categories and criteria

Nominees applying for the General Award (individual or group) will apply for one category. Applying for one category does not exclude them providing evidence from another. For example, if a nominee selects work-based learning, then they may also provide evidence of how they support the wellbeing of the learner.

The categories align with TEC and Ako Aotearoa strategies, were recommended from a Reference Group, and were then tested with stakeholders. The categories will be retained for a period of no less than three consecutive years to allow organisations to plan accordingly, including for their internal award systems.

General Award categories

Advancing approaches to, and the outcomes of, work-based learning

Work-based learning refers to learning that is carried out mainly in the workplace, with learners who are employed (full or part-time, including volunteering). In this category, the applicant will outline how their educational practice enhances the workplace as a site of learning and creates new possibilities and/or outcomes, including strengthening the role of employers as educators. The work-based learning should be achieved over a sustained period and may include, but is not limited to, contexts such as on-job learning, apprenticeships, practicum, service learning, placement, apprenticeships, or work experience.

Achieving diversity and inclusion for improving outcomes for: Māori learners; Pacific learners; neurodiverse learners; and/or learners with disabilities

Applications in this category will focus principally on learning and outcomes for ākonga in one or more of the groups outlined above. The applicant will provide evidence of how their practice is inclusive, enhances learning, and achieves significant outcomes for all ākonga. This may be achieved in mixed groups or in targeted learning opportunities for one or more of the identified groups.

Innovation in learning, teaching, and curriculum (including developers, educators, or combinations)

In this category, applicants will provide evidence of significant innovations that lead to improved learning and outcomes. A wide range of initiatives may be considered covering learning contexts such as class-based, work-based, or online learning. Curriculum innovation may include initiatives that, for example, reconceptualise curriculum; promote access, participation, and inclusion; and/or achieve enhanced outcomes for all.

Progressing educational partnerships and collaboration

Educational partnerships and collaboration occur in many ways. Applicants may include evidence of internal partnerships or collaboration involving, for example, ākonga, support staff, peers, or colleagues from other parts of the organisation. They may also provide narrative and

evidence of external collaboration and/or partnerships that cross organisations or sectors to enhance learner outcomes.

Initiatives for progressing hauora and wellbeing in education

The progression of hauora and wellbeing is an important component of successful outcomes of educational endeavour. Applicants in this category will provide evidence of initiatives that, while focusing on hauora as a component of the provision, result in enhanced outcomes for ākonga, their whānau, and communities.

Progressing seamless ākonga transitions between contexts

In this category, applicants will outline initiatives and their outcomes that contribute to successful transitions for learners and enhance their chances for success. This may include internal transitions, such as from foundation or vocational education and training certificates, or diplomas to degree-level programmes. It may also include transitions between, for example, community-based education and tertiary education organisations, or from school to on-job training. Applicants will describe how the transition arrangements have led to enhanced outcomes.

3.1.1 Overarching criteria for Individual and Group Awards

The nomination will begin with the category that the applicant selected.

The nominee's portfolio should provide narratives and evidence about the overall quality of practice within that category. In what ways is the practice outstanding? How is it differentiated from business-as-usual? To what degree does it utilise innovative practices and achieve exceptional outcomes?

Overall, the panel will be looking for **evidence** that nominees:

- a) are strongly focused on evidence of sustained contribution to and impact on learner success, and the subsequent impact on whānau, communities, and employment outcomes.
- b) have learners with their whānau at the centre of education. Outline how you have high aspirations for every learner, design and deliver education that responds to their needs, and sustains their identities, languages and cultures.
- c) have barrier free access for all learners including Māori, Pacific Peoples, neurodiverse, disabled and those with learning support needs. Outline how your initiatives have impacted learners and how you address the equity and diversity challenges.
- d) are proactive in their own professional development as educators and content specialists.
- e) demonstrate leadership and have made a significant contribution to the educational practice of colleagues (internal and/or external), to relevant communities, and/or to their particular discipline/focus area.
- f) inform their practice from sources such as course/outcome evaluations, research, self-reflection, colleagues, peer reviews, learners, former learners, and other relevant stakeholders.

3.1.2 General Individual Awards Criteria

The nominee will provide information about their work in their selected category. All categories will use the five areas listed below to structure the nomination.

1. Context

Describe the learning-related context within the category that you are focusing on.

- What is the tertiary educational context in which the nominee is working? How does this relate to the teaching and learning process in its widest sense? This can include community-based, work-based, class-based, online, or other educational settings.
- Why are you focusing on this particular context?
- What was the situation for learners and learning that created an impetus for change or innovation?
- What elements of the Tertiary Education Strategy are highlighted?

2. Approach

Explain what you have been doing and how it is responsive to your learners' needs.

- What approaches, solutions or interventions have you settled on?
- Why are you using these approaches and how do they demonstrate identified good practice?
- What barriers or obstacles have you had to overcome and how?
- In what ways have you included success factors for Māori and Pacific learners?
- How long have you been using these approaches?
- How have your approaches adapted over time and why?

3. Impact

Detail the impact your practice is having and how you know this.

- Who is impacted – ākonga, whānau, communities, workplaces, colleagues, organisations, sector, etc?
- How do you know your practice has made an impact?
- How significant is the scale and reach of the impact?
- How are you addressing issues of equity and diversity?
- What measures or indicators do you have that provide evidence of impact?
- What was the impact beyond the learning environment?

4. Leadership, partnership, and collaboration

Describe the key aspects of your leadership and collaboration in this mahi.

- Who are you working with in this mahi?
- How is your mahi building partnerships, connectedness, and collaboration with a range of different people and groups?

- How has your own reflection and development helped progress the mahi you are working on?
- What leadership actions have you undertaken and how are they impacting the context and outcomes for learners?
- How is your leadership impacting the capability of others?
- To what extent has your leadership been recognised by others?

5. Sustainability

Outline the ways in which your initiatives are sustainable in the short and long term.

- How sustainable is the work you are doing?
- How has or can the mahi be replicated in other contexts?
- How might the initiative and impact continue?
- How might a national award help to progress this initiative and/or disseminate good practice?

3.1.3 General Group Award Criteria

Nominees will provide information about their work in their selected category. They will provide evidence of the overarching criteria listed in 3.1.1. They will also provide narratives and evidence about the two criteria below:

1. Evidence of the group's collaborative approach:

Areas to focus on will include:

- The group's purpose and values.
- How reflective practice informs the collaborative approach and outcomes.
- Ways in which a learning culture is established and maintained.
- How relationships inform and progress the group's mahi.
- The leadership actions that are undertaken.

2. Evidence of the group's practice, impact, and outcomes of the collaborative approach:

Areas to focus on will include:

- Ways in which learner-centredness is at the heart of the mahi.
- How context-specific learning and teaching practices, including Māori and Pacific people's pedagogies, are embedded.
- How learning environments are enhanced.
- What impactful outcomes have been achieved.
- What potential there is for progression of the mahi.

Reach and Value

The judging panel will be looking for evidence of the reach and value of the mahi. For reach, this focuses on the scale of influence and may include reach at local, department, or community level. It may also include broader reach into organisational, national, or international initiatives. Other ways reach can be considered is in terms of who is impacted by the mahi – ākonga, learners in transition, whānau, communities, online learners, etc. There may be reach into the participants' lives and subsequent employment or other outcomes.

The nomination should also comment on the value of, or benefits derived from, the initiative. This may be evidenced by changes in approach to teaching and learning that contribute to enhanced teaching practice or learner learning experiences. It could include a range of ways in which learner outcomes, learning and teaching practice, policy change, or similar aspects are being achieved for akōnga and their whānau, or for graduate and employment outcomes.

3.2 Kaupapa Māori Award

Ko te Tohu Kaupapa Māori

Ko te Tohu Kaupapa Māori he mea whakatū mō te momo whakaako e whakaū ana i te reo Māori, i ngā tikanga Māori me te mātauranga Māori. Ko te kaiwhiwhi o tēnei tohu me mātua kōkiri rawa i te momo akoranga e arataki ana i te Kaupapa Māori, arā, e whakamahia ana ngā mātāpono, ngā uara, ngā whanonga me ngā tukanga Māori, e ai ki te tirohanga o te ao Māori tonu.

Ko ngā kaitono me tuku rawa ngā whakaaturanga me ngā taunakitanga o te pānga o ā rātou whakaakoranga me tā rātou kaiarahitanga ā-Kaupapa Māori nei, ki runga ki:

- ngā ākonga me ō rātou whānau, hapū, iwi me ō rātou hāpori Māori rānei;
- te whanaketanga o te reo Māori, ngā tikanga Māori me te mātauranga Māori;
- ngā hāpori kei waho atu i tō rātou akomanga; me
- tā rātou Kaupapa akoranga.

E wātea ana te tohu nei ki ngā kaimahi mātauranga e kōkiri ana i te Kaupapa Māori o te rāngai kura tuatoru puta noa, tae atu hoki ki ngā rāngai o te mātauranga mō te hāpori pakeke, mō te whakangungu tūmataiti, mō ngā pūkenga, mō te hangarau, mō te iwi-Māori, mō ngā wānanga Māori me ngā whare wānanga auraki rānei.

The Kaupapa Māori Award is for educational practice that incorporates te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori. The recipient of this award prioritises a Kaupapa Māori-led approach that incorporates Māori principles, values, behaviours, and processes within a Māori philosophical framework.



Kelli Te Maihāroa (centre), 2024 Kaupapa Māori Awardee

Applicants will need to provide details and evidence of the impact their Kaupapa Māori-led practice and leadership in this area has had on:

- learners and their whānau, hapū, iwi and/or Māori communities
- the advancement of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori
- communities outside of their classroom, and
- their discipline.

The award is open to Kaupapa Māori-led educators from across the tertiary sector, including the adult community education, private training education, skills and technology, iwi-Māori, Wānanga, and/or university sectors.

Kaupapa Māori Award criteria

1. Ko te Whakamārama - Context

Describe the learning-related context of your subject area. Outline and explain the central components of your own personal philosophy and how they align with a Kaupapa Māori philosophical approach to teaching and learning.

2. Ko te Whakaako - Educational practice

Describe the ways in which your practice is influenced by Kaupapa Māori principles.

Highlight your Kaupapa Māori pedagogical approach(es) that have had demonstrable success. Describe any innovative change(s) that you have made, the reason for the change(s) and provide evidence of the effect(s) they have had on your learners.

Describe how your Kaupapa Māori pedagogical approach(es) is/are learner-centred. Explain how through using Kaupapa Māori principles you have empowered learners to take leadership in their learning.

Describe your approach(es) to assessment and feedback and how they have taken into consideration Kaupapa Māori principles that have contributed to learner success.

Describe the ways in which your Kaupapa Māori-led practice has contributed to and influenced the field of teaching.

Provide evidence of the impact your Kaupapa Māori-led practice and initiatives has had on your learners and in the wider field of teaching.

3. Ko te Mātauranga - Knowledge

Describe the ways in which you incorporate te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori into your practice, and any innovation in the development of curriculum that you have initiated as a result.

Highlight the ways in which you use te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori to enhance learning and develop learner capabilities in your subject area and wider (if applicable). Describe the impact it has had on your learners and others.

Identify the ways in which your practice actively promotes te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori, and the impact your teaching has on the advancement of each of these.

Provide evidence of the impact the incorporation of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori has had on your learners, others (where applicable), and in your subject area.

4. Ko te Rangatiratanga – Leadership

Describe how your Kaupapa Māori-led practice has demonstrated rangatiratanga/leadership in improving outcomes for learners, how it has impacted your discipline, and how it has advanced te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori.

Highlight the ways in which your Kaupapa Māori-led practice has influenced and developed the capabilities of others, including colleagues, your wider institution, and others on either a national or international level.

Provide evidence of the impact your leadership in Kaupapa Māori-led teaching has had.

5. Ko te Awenga – Influence

Describe the ways in which your practice develops connections with communities outside of your classroom and the significance of these connections. This may include other areas of your institution, local, national, or international indigenous communities, employers, industry, public service groups, and/or professional groups.

Highlight the ways in which your practice has enhanced whānau, hapū, iwi, and/or hapori Māori education aspirations, and the impact it has had for these groups.

Provide evidence of the impact your Kaupapa Māori-led practice has had on others outside of your classroom.

3.3 Le Moana Mua Award

Le Moana Mua award recognises the outstanding practice of Pacific Educators, that is, those who are educators of Pacific ethnicity and who educate Pacific peoples. The name Moana refers to people of the ocean. Mua refers to first for leadership, and 'mua o', to honour those who have heeded the call to serve with excellence and leadership in tertiary education.

We hope that all people of Pacific origins, including people from Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia will participate in the award. One source of inspiration for the name came from Wan Solwara that is a Tok Pisin, Pijin, Bislama word which the three countries: Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu share. This means one ocean, one people. It reflects not a single ocean, but rather a connected space that holds distinct and diverse languages, cultures and communities from across the Pacific and throughout the Great Ocean.

The Moana Mua award celebrates the richness of peoples that have travelled to Aotearoa New Zealand to serve as tertiary educators.

Tertiary Education Organisation leaders are asked to encourage and nominate people to be considered for an award. The Association of Pasifika Staff in Tertiary Education (APSTE) may also encourage and nominate Pacific Educators to be considered for an award. The nominee can prepare the nomination, or it can be done on their behalf. Nominations for individuals and groups are welcome.

Nominations can be a written document or a combination of a document and a video. The nomination has a total word count of 4,500 words and the assigned template must be used. A video is welcome to support the written nomination. For each 1 minute of video the word count is reduced by 200 words. The maximum length of video is 17 minutes. This will leave a minimum of 1100 words to write. The written and video nominations should address the points in the structure of the nomination below.

The criteria for the Le Moana Mua Award are based on Chu-Fuluifaga and Ikiua-Pasi's (2021) research on phenomenal educators for Pacific learners. This research outlines a process that can improve teaching practice that results in transformational change in Pacific learners. The 10 Habits can give teachers the confidence that they are on the right path to the journey to develop outstanding practice.

Chu-Fuluifaga, C., & Ikiua-Pasi, J. (2021). *From good to great: The 10 habits of phenomenal educators for Pacific learners in New Zealand tertiary education*. Ako Aotearoa. Available from <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/from-good-to-great/>

Le Moana Mua Criteria

The nomination should be based around the 10 Habits in the phenomenal educator framework (see page 14). Consider the Habits and provide narratives and evidence about your practice. Use the reflective questions to help develop the nomination. Give evidence of impact on sustained learner success, and the subsequent impact on whānau, communities, and employment outcomes.

Also, include:

- The nominees teaching and learning context and the key challenges of their teaching.
- An outline of who the learners are, and what they are learning. Include the number of learners, challenges, and the wider impact of the learning.
- Evidence of professional development.
- Leadership with support to the educational practice of colleagues and communities.



Jone Tawaketini - 2024 Le Moana Mua Awardee awardee

Outline of the 10 Habits in the phenomenal educator framework to reflect on and respond to

1. Fenua: The pedagogy of reflection. Reflecting on your teaching performance is essential to improve and refine inclusive educational practices.

- What are your experiences and stories where you identify opportunities and took action to improve your teaching?

2. Moana: Know your Pacific learner and context. Be a transformative educator by gaining a deeper understanding of Pacific learners. It is essential that educators understand this diversity and respect it.

- What do you do to know and understand your Pacific learners?

3. Vaka: Educate with Phenomenal Pacific-centric methods. Educators need to be connected to your Pacific learners and their communities. Pacific content and examples will help make your course more Pacific-centric.

- How do you take a Pacific-centric approach in your teaching?

4. Le Teu le Va: Build teaching and learning relationships with Pacific learners. Pacific learners often attribute their educational success to someone who has cared, who has understood their contexts, and has supported their education. The values of trust, honesty, respect, and empathy give life to the teacher learner relationship; and, if these are not established from the outset, teaching will not function effectively.

- How do you build relationships with your learners?

5. Ola: Develop phenomenal practices. The teacher will develop learning opportunities in classes, online and in the workplace. This could be presentations, discussions, online activities and learning on the job.

- What phenomenal practices do you use to help learning?

6. Teatea: Instil motivation and good work habits. Help learners to make the transition to tertiary education as empowering as possible. Focus on the strengths that the learner brings to the classroom and build on these strengths. Help motivate and nurture your learners and help them visualise what is possible for their future. Support learners to realise their abilities and strengths and how these can be used in their lives.

- How do you motivate and encourage learners?

7. Aupuru: Cultivate creativity and enthusiasm. Pacific learners thrive with enthusiastic educators and respond well to them. Consider ways that Pacific knowledge systems and cultures can be used to facilitate Pacific learners. An enthusiastic educator brings excitement, enjoyment, and anticipation to their teaching, engages learners to participate and stimulates them to explore the subject. A teacher's enthusiasm can ignite the curiosity of learners and jumpstart their motivation to learn.

- How do you cultivate creativity and enthusiasm for your learners?

8. Putuputu: Construct a Pacific learning community. The building of community fosters learners' cultural identity and encourages a sense of belonging. It brings their lives and interests to the forefront of education, rather than hiding it away.

- How do you create a Pacific learning community for your learners? What factors can enhance their learning?

9. Arofa: Enable mentoring to be a natural part of your teaching and manage the 'wobbles' that arise. Mentoring can foster the growth and development of the mentee. The mentor can serve as an important guide or reality checker, introducing the mentee to the environment he or she is preparing for.

- How is mentoring a natural part of your teaching?

10. Ti'ama: Deconstruct and emancipate your Pacific learners' experiences. Encourage learners to bring their cultures with them to their learning. Focus on what works for learners, rather than on what they do not have. A phenomenal educator will have a high level of self-awareness and reflection and meet the needs of their Pacific learners.

- How do you give learners the freedom to be themselves as Pacific?

4 Criteria – Te Tohu Reo Māori Award

Te Tohu Reo Māori Award will recognise the practice of kaiako who are teaching te reo Māori. The recipient will have made an outstanding contribution to the teaching and learning of te reo Māori over at least four years.

This is an opportunity to celebrate our unsung heroes of te reo Māori from the flax roots level to the heights of academia in the broad effort to normalise te reo Māori again in Aotearoa. Nominations are encouraged from right across the tertiary sector.

This award differs from other Te Whatu Kairangi Awards as there is a two-step nomination process. Step 1 is a Nominator's outline of the kaiako's teaching and their impact. There will be a shortlisting process and of those Nominees who go forward, their workplace will be contacted to seek their endorsement of the nominated kaiako and to confirm they fulfil the requirements such as the four years length of service. Step 2 is the Nominees will be contacted and informed of their nomination. They will be asked to endorse their nomination and apply by providing additional information (4 pages maximum).

One award of \$15,000 is available.

Criteria and Nomination Process

Step 1: Nomination

Nominate a kaiako who is teaching te reo Māori. Use the Word Template provided at the Ako Aotearoa website and submit it via the website. The nomination should be no more than two pages.

The nominator/s should provide the following information about the kaiako they are nominating:

- A description of what it is like to be, or have been, a student in the kaiako's classroom; or a colleague or peer of that kaiako.
- The impact the kaiako has on their learners, and, where applicable, on whānau, hapū, iwi and wider communities; and on te reo Māori revitalisation.
- Evidence of impact of their teaching (where possible) e.g., reputation, popularity, student numbers, evaluation feedback.
- Contributions made by the kaiako to their learners' ability to understand, speak, read, and write te reo Māori.
- Outstanding and unique aspects of their abilities as a kaiako of te reo Māori.
- Creativity of their approach.
- What inspired you to nominate the kaiako?

To catch the attention of the judges, nominators should focus on and highlight the special and outstanding characteristics of the nominated kaiako.

Nominations from Nominators for Step 1 close at 5pm on 16 April 2025

Shortlist and endorsement from employer

There will be a shortlisting process led by the Kaihautū Mātauranga Māori of Ako Aotearoa. The employer of each shortlisted kaiako will be contacted by staff of Ako Aotearoa to seek their endorsement of the nominated kaiako (if the nominator was not their employer) and to confirm the kaiako fulfils the requirements such as the four years length of service.

Step 2: Nominee applies and provides extra information

The shortlisted nominees who meet the full requirements will be contacted and informed of their nomination. They will be asked to endorse their nomination and to provide the following information (4 pages maximum):

- Their pepeha details.
- Their te reo Māori teaching background/context with adult learners e.g., where they have taught, for how long, and to whom.
- Their beliefs about teaching te reo Māori.
- Their commitment to teaching te reo Māori and to Māori learner success.
- Highlights of being a kaiako of te reo Māori.
- Impacts on learners, and, where applicable, whānau, hapū, iwi and wider communities; and on te reo Māori revitalisation.
- Evidence of impact, where possible e.g., reputation, popularity, student numbers, evaluation feedback.
- Contribution to learners' ability to understand, speak, read and write te reo Māori.
- Outstanding and unique abilities as a kaiako of te reo Māori.
- Creativity of approach.

To catch the attention of the judges, a shortlisted nominee should focus on and highlight their special and outstanding characteristics. We will contact the Nominator to encourage their shortlisted Nominee to apply and to assist them. See the process below.

Applications by shortlisted Nominees for the Step 2 stage of the process close at 5pm on 27 June 2025

Process to select the Te Tohu Reo Māori Award winner

A selection panel of three te reo Māori teaching experts will select the Te Tohu Reo Māori awardee. The panel will not include those working at Ako Aotearoa.

The nomination of the Te Tohu Reo Māori awardee will be passed to the Te Whatu Kairangi panel to decide if it is worthy of the Prime Minister's Educator of the Year Award. To help make the decision for this award, the Nominee will be asked to provide a maximum of three formal references (e.g., from learners, peers, employers of former learners, community members) and a representative sample of learner/course feedback and evaluations from the time period covered by the application. Two people from the Te Tohu Reo Māori panel will be on the Te Whatu Kairangi panel.

Conditions of Entry

1. Nominations by nominators in Step 1 can be written in te reo Māori, English or bilingually but do not repeat information in the other language. Nominations must be 2 pages maximum. They close on 16 April 2025.
2. Applications by nominees in Step 2 should be written in te reo Māori. They must be 4 pages maximum. The applications close on 27 June 2025.
3. Nominators of shortlisted nominees will be contacted by Ako Aotearoa to encourage their nominee to apply; and if possible, to assist the nominee to fill in the application.
4. The award is for kaiako who are teaching te reo Māori.
5. The kaiako may teach Māori and/or non-Māori learners.
6. Nominees must teach te reo Māori to adult learners as part of the New Zealand tertiary education sector. This must have been for a minimum of four years. This can be part-time or full-time; and it does not need to be consecutive or continuous years of teaching, or at one institution only.
7. Individuals cannot nominate themselves.
8. Nominations (Step 1) and Applications (Step 2) can only be made on the Word template available on the Ako Aotearoa website.
9. The nomination is by text only and should not include images or videos.
10. Nominations are for individuals only.
11. Unsuccessful nominees may be re-nominated in subsequent years.
12. A successful nominee can be nominated for another Te Whatu Kairangi award in subsequent years.
13. A nominee can be nominated by more than one nominator.
14. A nominator can only nominate one person for this award per year.
15. It is permissible to contact Ako Aotearoa for guidance and support of a nomination.
16. All nomination information is the property of Ako Aotearoa.
17. Ako Aotearoa may publish extracts from the nominations.
18. Nominators and nominees may be contacted by Ako Aotearoa for further information and for publicity purposes.
19. The award is granted on the understanding that award recipients will use the award monies on initiatives that will enhance the recipient's teaching career, promote good practice and/or benefit learners. The recipients will also be willing to share, present and promote good practice.
20. The Judges' decisions are final, and no correspondence will be entered into.

5 Background

5.1 The significance of Te Whatu Kairangi

From a Māori perspective, after the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku our world was originally void of superior forms of knowledge. It instead resided in the realms of the atua who dwelt in the heavens. This knowledge was obtained by the ascension of Tāne (or in some cases Tāwhaki) to the twelfth heaven and brought back to earth to be used by mankind.

From the heavens Tāne retrieved three baskets of knowledge: te Kete Aronui (knowledge pertaining to good, all things humane and peaceful), te Kete Tuatea (knowledge pertaining to all evil arts, warfare, and black magic) and te Kete Tuauri (knowledge of ritual and of all ceremonies designed to remove the restrictions (tapu) that are placed on the relationships that connect all things on earth and in the heavens). This knowledge formed the content of formal study in the whare wānanga (learning institutions of esoteric knowledge).

The curriculum of the whare wānanga was split in two: kauwae runga (teachings concerning the Supreme Being, cosmogonic and anthropogenic myths, etc) and kauwae raro (historical traditions, matters of this world). Learners went through an intense learning programme, where the information was transmitted orally in a rote learning fashion. They were then subjected to a series of tests to ensure that they had memorised the content of the whare wānanga to a satisfactory level.

Whatu or stones were used throughout the learning to embed the information within the learners. Upon the conclusion of their time as a learner of the whare wānanga, learners were given a particular stone called a whatu kairangi to symbolise that they had successfully completed the programme of learning. In essence, they were now the tohunga, the learned experts.

In the Hawke's Bay district, some whare wānanga used small, flat, smooth stones that were red, black and, in some cases, white.

The term Whatu Kairangi is adopted as the name of the teaching awards. The awardees have spent a considerable amount of time becoming notable experts in their field, they have refined their teaching, and have been assessed by a panel of experts to have fulfilled the criteria of the awards that leaves no doubt of the impact they have had on their learners. The recipients have transitioned from one space to another. In essence, they have been recognised as the learned experts of teaching in their field.

Definitions

whatu (noun) initiation stone - a stone swallowed by the pupil (taura) during his initiation as a tohunga.

The whatu is a physical symbol that acknowledges the learner has reached a certain level in their learning. It is their 'tohu' or their 'award'. Where we might usually expect to see the word "Tohu" in a Māori name for the teaching awards (Ngā Tohu Whatu Kairangi), the use of "Whatu" serves the same purpose.

kairangi (noun) anything held in high esteem, darling, exalted chief, finest variety of greenstone, patron.

This word is used in the Māori name for a PhD - Tohu Kairangi. It also features on the Māori versions of the certificates presented to Kaupapa Māori Award winners. It, therefore, indicates something of the highest level.

5.2 The story behind the korowai – Rauaroha

The korowai – Rauaroha – is a chiefly garment that recognises the mana of the Educator of the Year, as part of the annual Te Whatu Kairangi awards ceremony. New recipients have the honour of being photographed wearing it at the ceremony, but it remains in the care of its guardian, Ako Aotearoa after the awards. However, recipients may request its use for formal occasions during the year. Meanwhile a taonga pounamu is bestowed on the new recipients of the Educator of the Year which they get to keep.

The karakia (ancient invocation) Te Hokai tells the story of how Tāne-nuiā-rangi climbed to the uppermost of the twelve heavens to obtain the three baskets of knowledge – te Kete Tuauri (sacred knowledge), te Kete Tuatea (ancestral knowledge), te Kete Aronui (life's knowledge).

Before he received the three baskets of knowledge on arrival at the entrance of the uppermost heaven, Tikitiki-o-Rangi, Tāne was met by the spiritual beings who guard the doorway to Tikitiki-o-Rangi. After undergoing a ceremony, Tāne was guided to Io (the supreme being), where he was asked about the reason for his visit. Tāne was then taken to a place called Rauaroha, where the male and female beings of Tikitiki-o-Rangi are, and he underwent ritual ceremonies to prepare him to receive the knowledge.

Rauaroha has been made entirely of muka (flax fibre) and bird feathers by Te Atiawa weaving expert, Veranoa Hetet. Rauaroha was six months in the creation and is the result of painstaking and fastidious work. During that time, Veranoa allowed her hands the luxury of just three weeks rest.

It has been created using traditional methods handed down through six generations of Veranoa's whānau. Veranoa says that korowai are made to last and, based on the longevity of similarly created Māori chiefly garments, Rauaroha will last for more than three hundred years. Ako Aotearoa acknowledges Veranoa's contribution to the awards.



The joint recipients of the 2024 Educator of the Year Award – Hiria Tumoana, Eastern Institute of Technology and Kerry Davis, Otago Polytechnic (centre left and right respectively), pictured here with Hon Penny Simmonds (far left) and the 2023 Educator of the Year recipient, Dr Enoka Murphy.

6 Enquiries

Any enquiries about the nomination process or requests for assistance in portfolio preparation should be made to the Regional Hub staff of Ako Aotearoa, who can arrange mentoring from the previous award winners.

- Ruth Peterson, Northern Hub Sector Services Manager
P: 021 943 490 E: ruth.peterson@ako.ac.nz
- Christina Crews, Central Hub Sector Services Manager
P: 06 951 9219 E: christina.crews@ako.ac.nz
- Jennifer Leahy, Southern Hub Sector Services Manager
P: 03 364 2500 E: jennifer.leahy@ako.ac.nz

All information about the nomination process:

Links to further information and resources can be found via our website at:
www.ako.ac.nz/te-whatu-kairangi

7 Checklist

1. Prepare your portfolio

Read the guidelines document. Gather evidence that supports your nomination.

2. Plan video and/or audio content well

Want to include video and/or audio content as part of your portfolio? Remember, 30 seconds of watching/listening time = 100 words of text, so plan well. Make sure your video/audio content brings new information that illustrates your practice against the criteria. Signpost your video or audio to the criteria well and keep your clip to a maximum of three minutes in length.

3. Help is available

Contact the Ako Aotearoa Sector Services Manager in your area for advice on preparing a portfolio (see Section 6 for details). They can connect you with a member of the Ako Aotearoa Academy for Tertiary Teaching Excellence for additional guidance or mentoring.

4. Check the category

For General Award nominations check that your portfolio makes a strong case for the category you selected.

5. Check against criteria

Check your portfolio covers all the criteria required (for either General, Kaupapa Māori, or Le Moana Mua Award).

6. Deadlines (please note different dates apply)

General, Kaupapa Maori and Le Moana Mua

5pm, 27 June 2025

Send one electronic copy of your portfolio (written and video/audio, if applicable), Nomination Form and Tertiary Education History form via the online form on the Ako Aotearoa website (must reach us no later than 5pm that day).

Te Tohu Reo Maori Award

Step One – Nomination, **5pm, 16 April 2025**

Step Two – **5pm, 27 June 2025**

Send one electronic copy of your portfolio (written and video/audio, if applicable), Nomination Form and Tertiary Education History Form via the online form on the Ako Aotearoa website (must reach us no later than 5pm that day).

Good luck – noho ora mai

The Ako Aotearoa team

8 Definitions

Award

Te Whatu Kairangi Aotearoa's Tertiary Teaching Awards is for outstanding tertiary educators in Aotearoa New Zealand. Those who gain an award will share their practice in building educational capability and sustained learner success and access a monetary grant to advance their work. The awards are made by the Minister of Education. There is also the Prime Minister's Educator of the Year award.

Award category

Those applying for a General Award will select a Category that focus on some of the important challenges facing tertiary education today.

Award criteria

Each award has criteria that the nominee will use to outline their outstanding practice. There are criteria for Kaupapa Māori, Le Moana Mua, General Individual, and General Group awards.

Group Award

A group is educators who collaborate to contribute directly to the achievement of successful outcomes for learners as described in the award criteria. The group can be between two to eight educators. Groups applying for a General Award should use the General Group criteria. Groups applying for Kaupapa Māori or Le Moana Mua Awards should use those criteria.

Nomination

Educators who wish to apply for an award must be endorsed by their organisation. The organisation can contribute up to four nominations (with a maximum of three in the General category).

Portfolio

The portfolio is for nominees to demonstrate how they meet the criteria for the award. There is a maximum number of 4,500 words in the portfolio and video or audio can also be used.



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