



# Whiria Ngā Rau

Progressing from  
student voice to  
partnerships

## Hutia Te Rito

*Hutia te rito o te harakeke  
Kei hea te kōmako e kō?*

*Kī mai ki ahau*

*He aha te mea nui?*

*He aha te mea nui o te ao?*

*Māku e kī atu*

*He tangata! He tangata! He tangata, hī!*

## Pull Out The Shoot

*Pull out the shoot of the flax bush*

*Where will the bellbird sing?*

*Say to me*

*What is the greatest thing?*

*What is the greatest thing in this world?*

*I will say*

*The people! The people! The people!*

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## Harakeke

**Te Rito o Te Harakeke describes and presents an indigenous Māori whakataukī on whānau.**

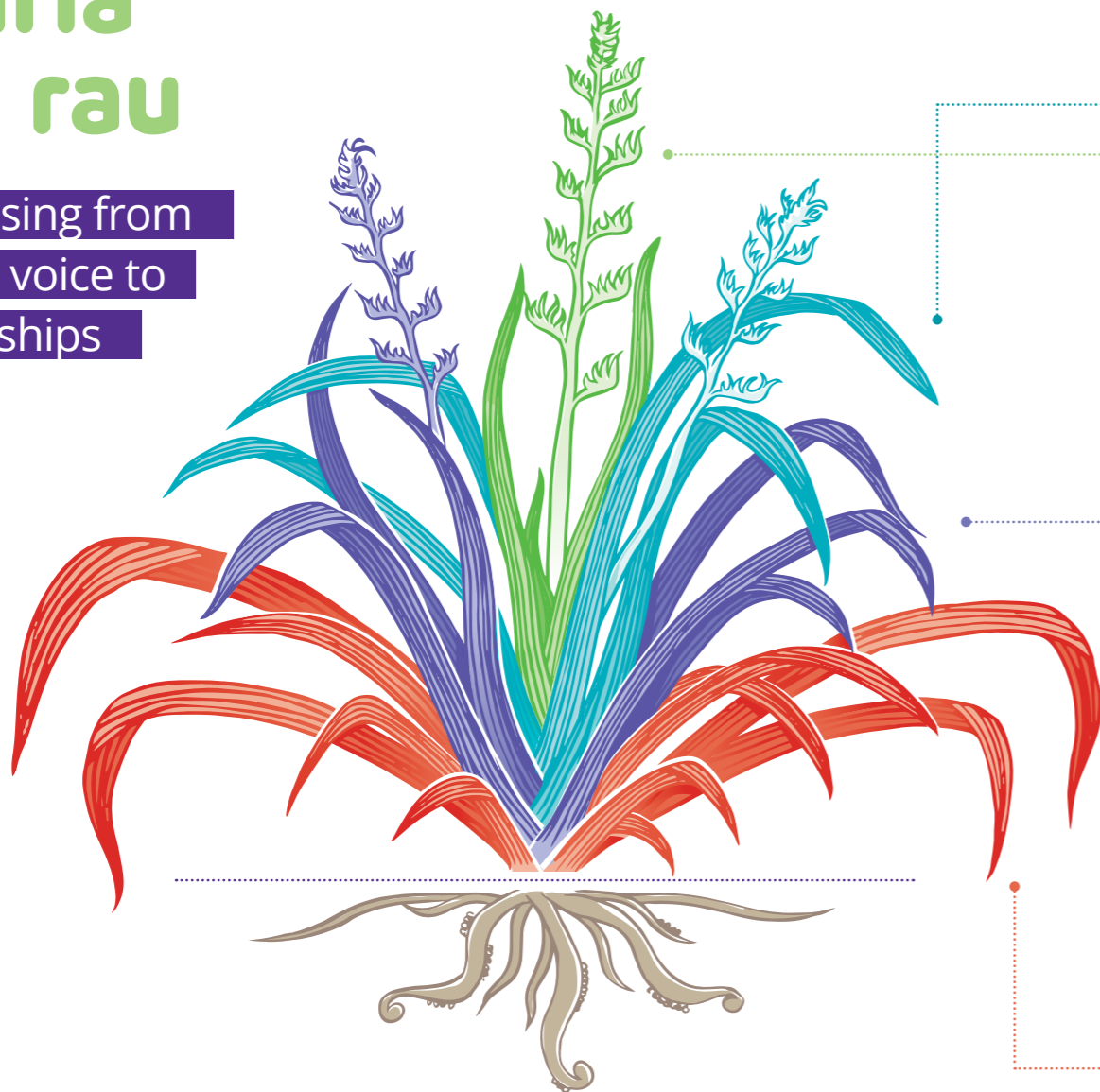
The focus centres around our obligation to nurture, support, and awahi our next generation.

For this reason, Te Whiria Ngā Rau draws from Te Rito o Te Harakeke and believes that students must be at the centre of the learner journey in tertiary education, strengthened with academic, mental, physical and community support. A paradigm shift is crucial to breathing life into this.

*Throughout Whiria Ngā Rau the terms student, learner and tauria are used interchangeably. This is a conscious decision to reflect the diversity of those who engage in tertiary education and the different ways they identify.*

# Whiria ngā rau

Progressing from  
student voice to  
partnerships



The **Whiria Ngā Rau** framework has four rau that taura (students) and providers can use to build partnerships:

## Whakapakari

*Strengthening students' voices*

- » Build capability and confidence to express learner voice
- » Develop ways of working that fit the learning environment
- » Receive and pass on lessons from previous cohorts
- » Make plans and offers to express student voice.

## Akoranga

*Learning with and from each other*

- » Work openly and transparently
- » Know what is expected of each other and stay motivated to continue the relationship
- » Learn to shape the relationship, measure progress, and reflect on improvements
- » Maintain feedback loops and report regularly.

## Whakawhanaungatanga

*Building connections with each other*

- » Engage in ways that honour Te Tiriti
- » Involve and hear diverse taura in decision-making
- » Share information
- » Grow relationships and extend networks.

## Mahitahi

*Working together*

- » Give practical effect to Te Tiriti
- » Develop ideas and solutions together
- » Shape engagements together and build routines to embed student voice
- » There are tuakana-teina relationships and roles can be reversed at any time.

Whiria = weave

Rau = leaf

# Whakapapa

## Te Mana Ākonga

Born out of the student protest movements of the 1970s, Te Mana Ākonga joins a long line of individuals and rōpū who wanted to change the status of ākonga Māori.

Te Mana Ākonga is the National Māori Tertiary Students' Association and provides a voice for ākonga Māori on issues that impact on them within the tertiary education environment.

We focus on assisting rōpū in advocacy, enhancing support services for ākonga Māori on campus, and keeping rōpū informed of issues that impact on them at a central government level.

Our whakapapa drives us in the mahi that we do, which is ensuring voices of ākonga Māori are heard and integrated as partners in the tertiary education system.



## New Zealand Union of Students' Associations

The New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) has a long and proud history of supporting students. Since 1929, we've tirelessly advocated and represented students in universities and polytechnics across Aotearoa New Zealand.

We believe that education is a public good and that the benefits of education aren't worn by the taura alone, but also their whānau, hapū, 'aiga, community and nation too. Education is inherently good for New Zealand and crucial to the strength, cohesion and advancement of our communities and democracy.

We are a member-led organisation, comprised of member student associations across universities and polytechnics in Aotearoa New Zealand. We are Te Tiriti partners with Te Mana Ākonga and recognise Taura Pasifika as the national voice for Pacific learners. To further strengthen the student movement, we have set up a National Rainbow Students' Committee and supported disabled leaders to establish the National Disabled Students' Organisation.



## Taura Pasifika

Since the 1960s waves of Pacific families have migrated to Aotearoa in search of educational opportunity for their children.

Over the last 40 years, Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island and Fijian student communities have championed fono to celebrate our culture and achievements in tertiary education.

Taura Pasifika has embraced some of the approaches that acknowledge Pacific in tertiary education and used these wins to build confidence across Pacific student communities.

In 2020, we celebrated the milestone of having five Pacific presidents leading student bodies at all five major tertiary providers in Auckland. This and other stories of Pacific resilience and success are testament that we belong in tertiary education and bring a much-needed dynamic to decision-making to benefit all those who follow us.



## National Disabled Students' Association

Formally established in 2021, the National Disabled Students' Association (NDSA) is the representative body for disabled taura in Aotearoa.

We strongly believe that we are not disabled by our impairments, but by the barriers that society place on us. It has long been understood that tertiary education can be a disabling environment, and so NDSA seeks to ensure that our voices are heard in addressing these issues. NDSA follows the mantra of the wider disability movement, "Nothing About Us Without Us".

Roughly one in five New Zealanders identify as having a disability, but disabled taura have often felt excluded from the conversation on student voice and the tertiary experience. Disabled students were excited by this project, as it was a fantastic opportunity to ensure that the disabled student experience was represented and seen in the stories we tell. Our involvement in this mahi has also provided an invaluable opportunity to create relationships and connections, one of the core benefits of student partnerships, and a brilliant pathway for NDSA to take off.







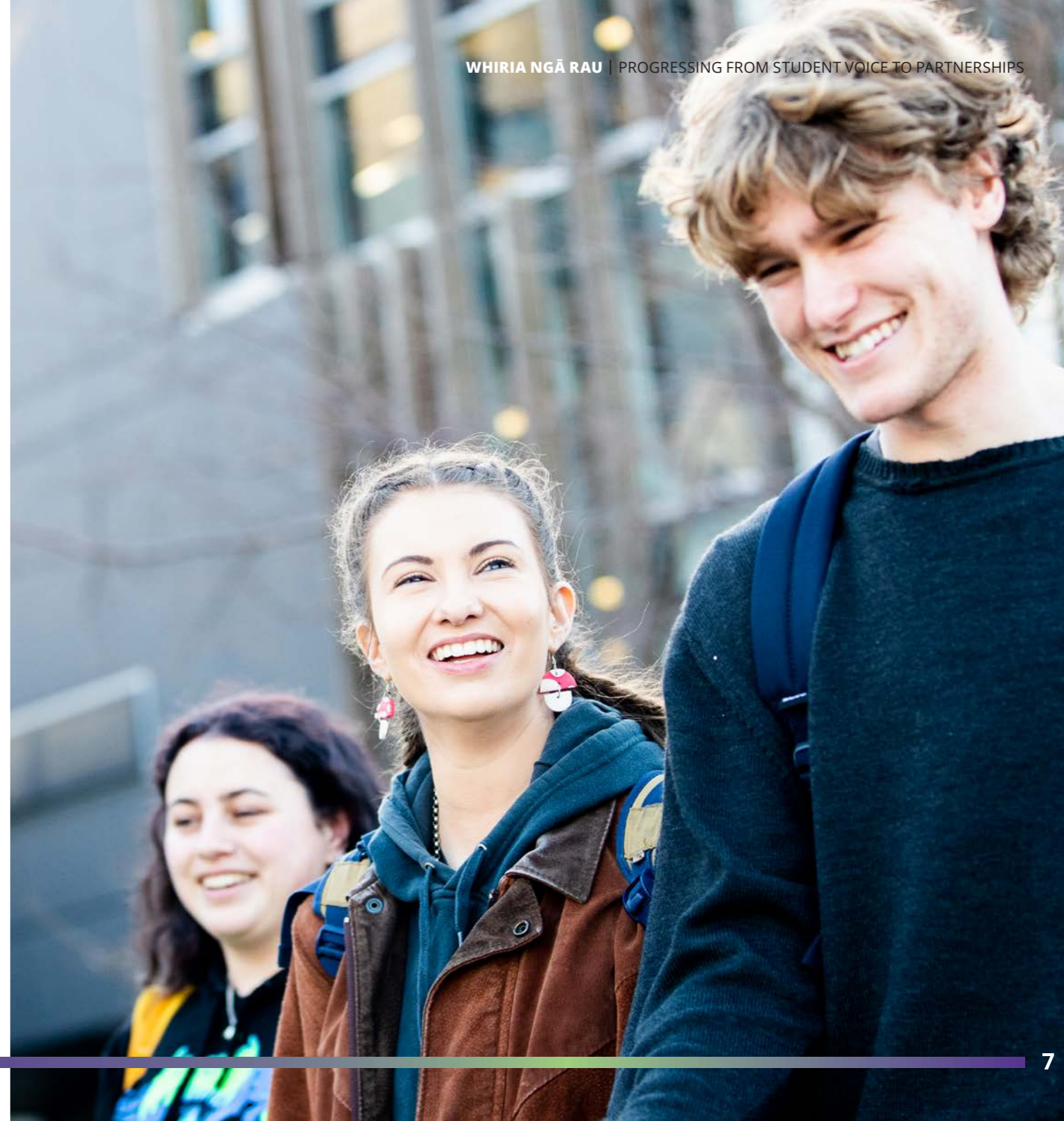
### Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education places learners and their whānau at the centre of everything we do to shape an education system that delivers excellent and equitable outcomes.

The Education and Training Act (2020) recognises the Crown's responsibility to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Other strategies reinforce how everyone – government agencies, providers, learners, whānau, hāpu, iwi, industries, and community organisations – has a role to play in shaping and delivering success. Covid forced an urgent rethink of these relationships, shifting our understanding of what's important, who has relevant information and how we reset the routines and pace of our work.

Leaders of student networks stepped up to help government understand the pressing needs facing taira, bringing us timely data about the barriers facing diverse taira and providing advice about possible solutions.

As lockdown lifted, student networks saw the opportunity to share their expertise around student voice. We saw a way to show how partnerships centred around learners might work. Our partnership created this framework and ways to make it real.



# Rethinking Student Voice

**A common question student representatives get asked is ‘what do students think?’, as if there’s such a thing as a single student voice. Although there are things that bring us together, we are an incredibly diverse community.**

We are parents and grandparents, school leavers and career changers. Some of us were born in Aotearoa, others have recently arrived. We’re domestic and international students, learning at home and abroad. We are neurodiverse and live with disabilities. We are workers, studying full-time, part-time or from time to time. We learn kanohi ki te kanohi, on our own, on campus, at work, at home, remotely, over quite varied blocks of time. We have similar and different values.

We are whole people, with full lives. Our identities – as tangata whenua, Pacific peoples, disabled people, city or provincial dwellers – and our whānau, hapu, iwi, ‘aiga, and communities are integral to our experiences as taura.

We are so much more than a disembodied ‘voice’, or a one-dimensional stereotype.

We are a rich and diverse community, learning and changing all the time. Our networks tell us there’s little satisfaction with the varied approaches to involving learners in decision-making. Inconsistencies usually mean that only some voices are involved in decisions that impact on taura ability to achieve. We see that as a threat to equity in our system and we know we can do better.

We hear outstanding examples of students and kaimahi as partners in learning; we also hear taura experiences of decisions being made about them without them.

*Kanohi ki te kanohi = face to face, in person*

The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of Tertiary Learners requires a whole of organisation approach to working proactively with diverse learners.

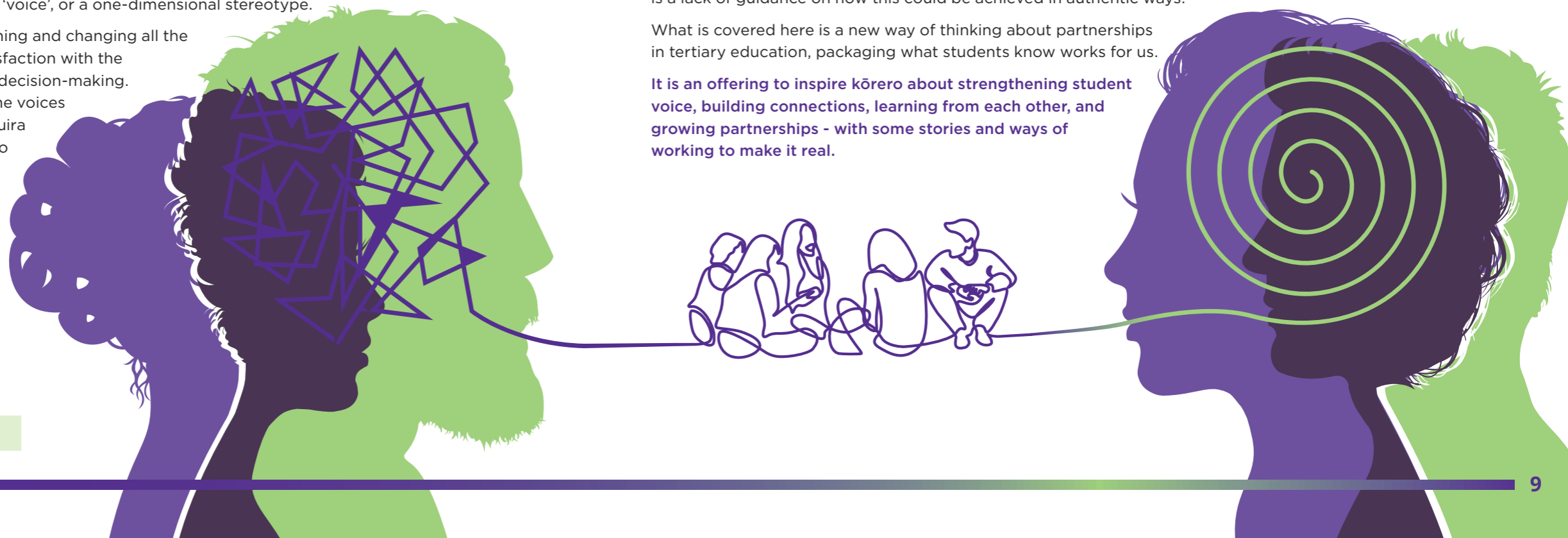
The way learner voice has been defined and confined is can no longer be used as a basis for in decision-making. We see that the next phase of this journey is about recognising:

- » Each taura is an expert on their experience of being a learner now
- » Providers have experience in making learners successful
- » Whānau, hapū, iwi, ‘aiga, government agencies and community organisations have a role in understanding and providing for the different needs of all taura.

We see the will to work together more meaningfully as key partners but there is a lack of guidance on how this could be achieved in authentic ways.

What is covered here is a new way of thinking about partnerships in tertiary education, packaging what students know works for us.

**It is an offering to inspire kōrero about strengthening student voice, building connections, learning from each other, and growing partnerships - with some stories and ways of working to make it real.**





# Whiria Ngā Rau



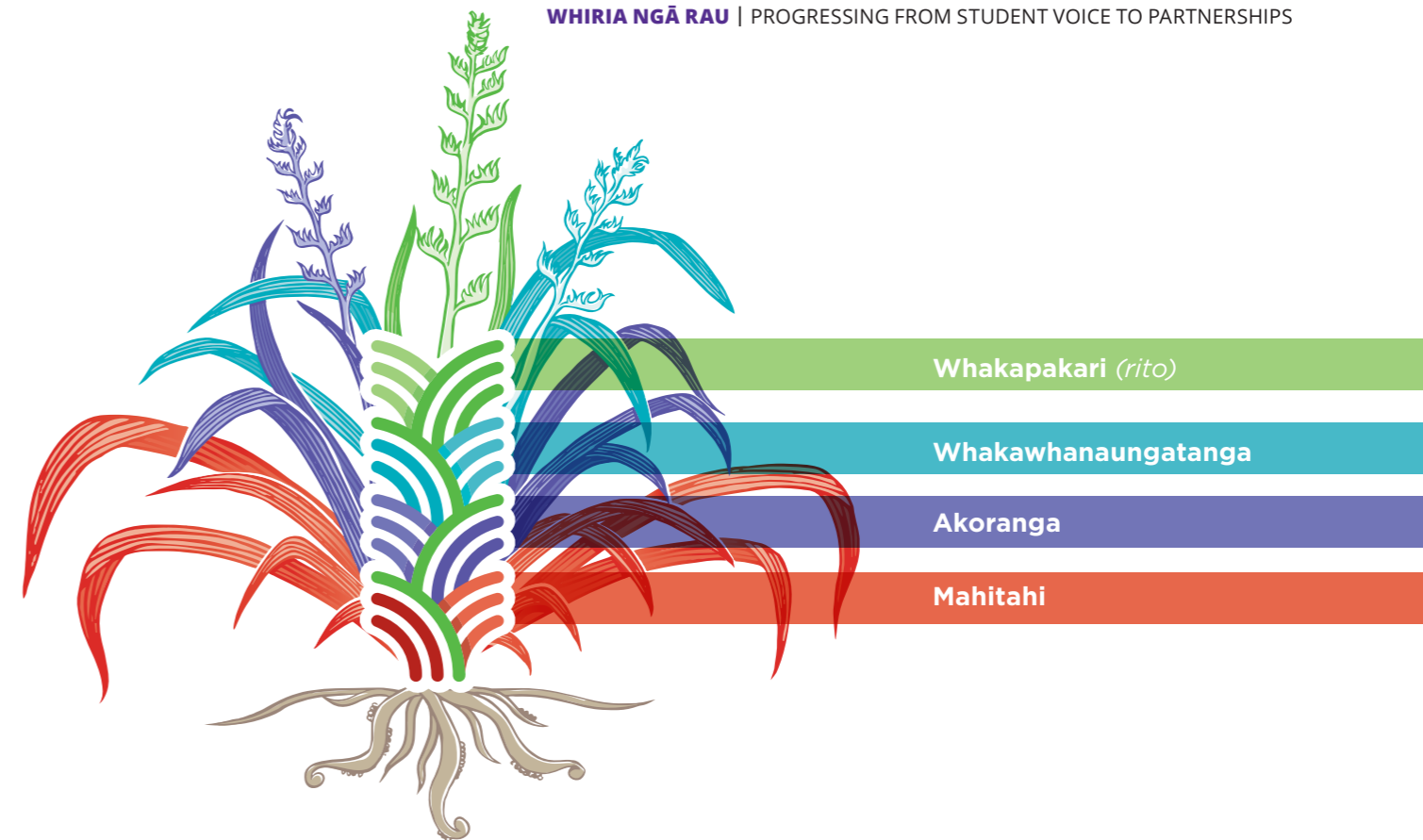
Student movements are integral to tertiary education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Drawing from our different roots, we are keen to pass on what we have learned to future students and providers.

We've been rethinking the meaning of 'student voice', with the solo, disembodied, one-way contribution that implies, and imagining what it might become in an education system that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and has learners at the centre.

For us, the harakeke is good way to explain the values that will help the shift we are looking for: from taura as disembodied 'voice' to being vital, well supported partners in learning.

Harakeke (flax plant) are strongly associated with whānau. The rito (central shoot) represents the growing child at the heart of the harakeke, the leaves either side of the rito can be understood as mātua (grandparents) and the outermost leaves represent tipuna (ancestors).

To flourish, partnerships between taura (student, apprentice) and providers will always be deeply rooted in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and networks of whānau, community and iwi.



Whakapakari (*rito*)

Whakawhanaungatanga

Akoranga

Mahitahi

The rito, the most vital part of the harakeke represents the continual strengthening - **whakapakari** - of students' voices so they don't wither and fade. Taura are surrounded by shoots of whakawhanaungatanga, akoranga, and mahitahi.

With **whakawhanaungatanga**, students and providers build connections with each other.

With **akoranga**, we learn with and from each other.

With **mahitahi** partnerships grow stronger through collective experiences and commitment to future generations. Over time new shoots may grow and existing leaves fall to the ground. Taura and providers may change, but their experiences continue to inform partnerships.

The harakeke draws collective strength from its deep roots and the leaves which protect and nurture one another.

# Whakapakari

## Strengthening student voice

**Strong student voice means involving learners in shaping an education system that works well for them and is equitable for all. It works best when it is part of everyday culture – a way of ‘being’ rather than simply a thing to ‘do’.**

Growing and strengthening student voice is a core role for student networks. But we’ve learned that we can’t do this on our own. We need help from providers and others so we can be well-informed about decision-making. We also welcome help with succession processes so new taura – in all their diversity – can be ready and confident to serve as leaders and participate as partners.

We are committing to engaging and empowering taura to partner with providers to reset the rhythm and value of student involvement in decision-making and in developing solutions that work for all.

*“We need to get rid of the assumption that taura need to be spoon-fed; what we need is to be developed.”*

*“Typical meeting settings don’t work for everyone: students with disabilities or chronic illnesses may prefer to engage online, or through email conversations. Taura with parental responsibilities will want to work around time with tamariki. The only time left may be a small window mid to late evening, or before the breakfast rush.”*

*“Taura networks have reasonably high turnover which has the benefit of continual renewal, with fresh eyes and minds being brought to the table.”*

*“Usually students have few opportunities to speak on behalf of other students and when they do, they’re not very experienced.”*

**Whakapakari:** We’ll know we’re successful in strengthening student voice when taura and providers:

- » **Develop ways of working that fit their learning environments**
- » **Receive and pass on lessons from previous cohorts**
- » **Make plans and offers to support student voice kaupapa**
- » **Build capability and confidence to express student voice.**

Some ways for taura and providers to make **whakapakari** real are:

- » Make time and space (over a meal is good) to reflect on the current state of student voice, what’s working and what isn’t.
- » Ask how well are we protecting each other’s rights under Te Tiriti?
- » Develop welcome packs and make sure they get to every student.
- » Support students to grow confident to have a say.
- » Plan training to help taura in standing committees, at course and faculty level.
- » Promote awareness of formal structures for how taura can participate in decision-making.
- » Talk about ways to make all taura, kaiako and kaimahi feel safe and included in interactions with each other.
- » Break down jargon; communicate orally, through text and symbols, in languages relevant to taura, in ways that are accessible to disabled learners.
- » Provide guidance to take away administrative hurdles, such as room bookings, sharing and reimbursing costs.
- » Student representatives are passionate, but they have competing priorities. As well as studying, they are juggling other life commitments. These include part time employment, family commitments, and full-time study on top of their student voice work.
- » Promote awareness of the guides and mentors – on staff and in student networks – who can help strengthen student voice.



# Whakawhanaungatanga

## Building connections together

**The only people who know what it's like to be a student now are today's students. We know what works for us and we're happy to share our insights.**

We'd like to know from the get-go what information providers need from us during our learning, and what decisions we'll be involved in, when and how. It's too late for consultation when a solution is nearly fully formed.

There are networks of taura who could benefit from more support from providers. We are more than just students – we belong to networks who know us, and who can support us. Providers are active in a range of local and national networks. We could invite each other to walk in these different worlds.

By working together, students and providers can involve more Māori, Pacific, disabled, international, interfaith, Rainbow, part-time, distance and mature taura in decision making.

*“Māori have been excluded from having a voice because there is often only one seat at the table and that goes to Pākehā networks. Even when we are included, our value is often to perform tokenistic roles such as saying the karakia.”*

*“When there's only one student at the table, they can only speak of their own or their cohort's experiences; they can't represent the diversity of voices.”*

*“Often Pasifika voices are left out. Why aren't there more seats at the table?”*

*“Develop relationships, have regular touch points and continue conversations every day – that way it becomes a habit, like making the bed!”*

**Whakawhanaungatanga:** We'll know we're successful in building connections with each other when taura and providers:

- » Engage in ways that honour Te Tiriti
- » Involve and hear diverse taura in decision-making
- » Share information
- » Grow relationships and extend networks.

Some ways for taura and providers to make building connections real are:

- » Prioritise building ongoing relationships with taura and their communities to find common ground and value-based goals.
- » Practise transparency with feedback loops and agreements.
- » Enable equitable participation for students by ensuring they are accessible, and meeting in comfortable and safe spaces for taura.
- » Whānau, iwi and community are involved in strengthening student voice.
- » Get out of our comfort zones and meet in places that are important to different taura and communities.
- » Find common ground by having some values-based discussions.
- » How are whānau, hapū and iwi involved in strengthening student voice?
- » Taura are informed and resourced to participate in decision-making.
- » Share information often and widely – not just on a need-to-know or just-in-time basis.
- » Let people know about issues as soon as they arise and engage from day one, not the end of the process.
- » Offer each other places at routine meetings.

# Akoranga

## Learning with and from each other

The concept of **ako**, learning from and with each other, is key to progressing from student voice to partnerships.

We'd like to work with providers to make sure that information is widely and easily accessible, to make sure there is time for taura to get ready to contribute and participate in decisions. We'd like to help providers get through to students in ways that work for both of us, and suggest ways to reach more of us.

We want to know what information providers are gathering from us, how useful it is, and what impact it has on decisions.

We are ambitious for strong, ongoing, trusting student-provider partnerships where there is genuine commitment to grow, learn and work together.

*"Say what we'll do to help each other and stick to the promise - or explain why that isn't possible."*

*"Providers do not need to carry all responsibility to convene and facilitate hui, gather data, and provide feedback. Taura are keen to take on these roles with support from providers."*

*"Taura and providers can canvas each other's perspectives on student voice - capture and report what is learned from this exercise and let people know what difference it will make."*

*"We can show providers and other taura what racial bias looks like, and work together on ways to address and eliminate it."*

**Akoranga:** We'll know we're successful in learning from and with each other when taura and providers:

- » Learn with and from each other
- » Work openly and transparently
- » Know what is expected of each other and stay motivated to continue the relationship
- » Learn to shape the relationship, measure progress, and reflect on improvements
- » Maintain feedback loops with diverse groups of learners and report back regularly.

Some ways for taura and providers to make **Akoranga** real are:

- » Develop an institutional expectation that student voice is consulted and used to influence decision-making.
- » Design resources for new taura and new kaiako that highlight the importance of student voice
- » Train taura and kaiako to host open, diverse hui that are accessible, use gender appropriate language and where sensitive issues are handled with respect.
- » Canvas each other's perspectives on student voice - capture and report what is learned from this exercise and let people know what difference it will make.
- » Develop and update partnership agreements that set out how to learn from and with each other.
- » Create imaginative ways for taura from different cohorts and backgrounds to regularly share their expertise as a student now.
- » Review how visible student voice is in induction and handover material for new taura and new kaiako.
- » Share research on good national and international examples of strengthening student voice.
- » Attend seminars and conferences together.
- » Prepare joint presentations or articles on student voice.
- » Have taura from different cohorts, programmes and backgrounds regularly share their expertise on what it's like to be a student.
- » Support students to create sustainable group models to ensure student health and mental wellbeing.
- » Invite feedback from community networks about how well the voices of taura are being heard.
- » Show what racial bias looks like, and work together on ways to address and eliminate it.
- » Different parts of the institution come together with taura to identify gaps in student voice and work on improvement.
- » Make sure feedback from diverse taura is captured and returned promptly
- » Explain how feedback is respected, valued, and acted on.
- » Set up some way to monitor standards of accuracy and timeliness.

# Mahitahi

## Working together as partners

**For us, student partnership means recognising and directly involving students' ideas, experiences, questions and concerns into decisions at all levels: from course development to service delivery.**

Tuakana-teina refers to the expectation that those who are ahead, leading or who know more, actively and regularly look behind to those who follow and help bring them up to the same place. Partners know these roles can be reversed at any time, and they value this aspect of the relationship.

*“We want to help strengthen the resolve to keep pushing for improvement and innovating together. Honour the Treaty. Connect and learn from each other. Mahitahi.”*

*“Taura networks and providers both have roles in gathering student feedback from multiple sources and making sure action is taken on it.”*

*“Values and actions weaving together.”*

*“We want to work in partnerships founded on trust, with accountabilities for both of us.”*

**Mahitahi:** We'll know we're successful in working together when taura and providers:

- » Give practical effect to Te Tiriti
- » Develop ideas and solutions together
- » Shape engagements together and build routines to embed student voice
- » There are tuakana-teina relationships and roles can be reversed at any time.

Some ways for taura and providers to make **mahitahi** real are:

- » Build an open communication, open door culture.
- » Ensure Māori voice is front and centre.
- » Agree on the principles and values for mahitahi upfront and regularly review these principles.
- » Agree on a list of priorities, issues and markers of success for the partnership.
- » Involve iwi, agencies, industries and community organisations in addressing priorities.
- » Maintain and evaluate feedback loops and measurements demonstrating the impact of student voice.
- » Arrange regular meetings between Pacific learners and their communities and leadership teams to talk through issues and develop solutions.
- » Innovate ways to empower learner voice across the whole organisation.
- » Ask each other 'what can we do to help?'
- » Inform and resource taura to participate in decision-making.
- » Reward taura participation in mahitahi.
- » Celebrate mahitahi success.





This mahi signals a commitment to stronger partnerships. It doesn't solve all challenges but it does offer a way to reflect on current practice and to make the expectation of authentic partnerships real.

Have a look at some student stories of progressing partnerships in tertiary education at [www.students.org.nz](http://www.students.org.nz)

*"We want learners to walk away with their shoulders up, a bit more confident about themselves and their place in the world."*

**Whano, whano! Haramai te toki! Haumi ē! Hui ē! Tāiki ē!**





September 2021

