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APPENDIX

STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF UNITEC AS A DISTINCTIVE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

A range of alternatives to achieve an appropriately broad level of input from staff at UNITEC was considered. A focus group approach was adopted as the best means of gathering 'rich' data and, incidentally, generating widespread involvement and a feeling of shared commitment amongst the staff. Nine members of UNITEC's Academic Issues Committee[1] agreed to act as facilitators for these focus groups. They represented a reasonable cross-section of staff at different levels within the institute and across the faculties. A formal training programme was set up for this group to provide focus group facilitation to elicit current staff understanding and interpretation of what being a distinctive university of technology meant for UNITEC. This training programme was designed to ensure that the focus group facilitation was undertaken on a consistent basis without personal bias, with a uniform set of focus group questions, and using a consistent format.

From this training programme, seven topic areas were established as the basis for consistent focus group discussion on what constitutes a 'university of technology' for UNITEC. These were
1. Teaching and learning
2. Research
3. Programmes and qualifications
4. Industry and employers

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[1] The Academic Issues Committee of the Institution was a formal subcommittee of the Academic Board which had a broad brief to pursue academic matters of institute-wide significance and make appropriate recommendations back to the Board. The formal membership of this committee included up to three academic staff representatives from each of the five faculties.

5. Student profile

6. Staff profile

7. Physical environment

For each topic a number of key issues were identified that were considered essential for discussion at each focus group meeting. In addition, each facilitator was given a standard 'introduction' package in the form of several overhead transparencies that was to be used to ensure a reasonable level of consistency in the way each focus group addressed its task.

It was decided to base the focus groups around existing academic units of the institute, rather than have random self-selection to groups. This was done so that, first, staff groups would have some natural synergy when discussing the issues and, second, they would be more inclined to turn up, knowing that their immediate colleagues would be likely to be there as well. In addition, it was hoped that possible differences and/or similarities of responses to issues from staff in different parts of the institute might be a useful source of analysis.

The unit chosen as the basis for each focus group was the academic department. All department heads were contacted and invited to select a time within a specified two-week time slot when a reasonable number of academic staff would be available for a one-hour focus group meeting. In addition, three sessions were timetabled for general staff, and they were invited to attend which ever of these they wished.

In all, 18 department-based focus groups were scheduled, in addition to the three general staff groups. A total of 230 staff participated. Facilitation of these groups was shared amongst the trained facilitators. The complete list of focus groups and the number of staff attending each session is shown in Table A.1.

At each focus group meeting, which was scheduled for one hour, the facilitator began the session with a standard introduction that lasted approximately 10 minutes. This was followed by structured discussion covering the seven topics listed earlier. Staff

comments were recorded on large sheets of butcher's paper so that all participants could clearly see them. Confirmation of their accuracy was sought at all times. Generally speaking, these written comments represented supported views on an issue after some general discussion. Occasionally a minority view was expressed and recorded as such on request. Towards the end of each session, those participating were asked if there were any other issues they wished to comment on. These comments were recorded in the same way. It is important to note that some focus groups did not address all of the topics. In these cases, the facilitator allowed discussion to remain on those areas on which the staff wished to concentrate.

Table A.1 List of focus groups by origin and number of staff participating in each group

No	Focus Group Origin	No. of Staff Participating
1	General Staff	2
2	General Staff	20
3	School of Construction	15
4	School of Performing Arts	3
5	Applied Management Department	17
6	Accountancy Law and Finance Department	19
7	Communication Department	16
8	Building Department	14
9	Horticulture Department	8
10	Civil and Environmental Engineering Department	8
11	General Staff	20
12	Office Administration Department	5
13	School of Architecture	14
14	Community Studies Department	6
15	School of Education	10
16	Puukenga (Maori Studies Department)	5
17	Health Science Department	8
18	Information Systems and Computing Department	14
19	School of Nursing	14
20	Tourism Department	5
21	School of Languages	7
	Total	230

At the completion of the focus group sessions, all of the recorded comments for each focus group were assembled and typed on to A4 sheets. These were then returned to the

groups (essentially the departments) for confirmation that they accurately reflected the discussions that had occurred.

All of the confirmed staff comments were then regrouped under each of the seven defined topic areas, plus a further section for 'other issues'. These comments were then grouped within each topic area under a series of predominant themes that emerged during this preliminary analysis, and a summary of the key points from this analysis prepared under each of the topic headings. This summary was distributed to all staff via e-mail.

In addition, a round of feedback presentations was scheduled over a two-week period to give staff the opportunity to discuss the emerging trends from their previous comments and to add to them if necessary. These presentations were open to all staff, with the expectation that staff from different sections of the institution would attend and hear one another's points of view, as well as contributing further comments. In the event, staff attendance at these sessions was light, and little additional comment was provided. The low attendance and absence of substantive additional comment suggested that staff were reasonably happy that the summaries fairly reflected their initial comments, and further that the picture of UNITEC as a distinctive university of technology that emerged from the focus groups was one with which they were comfortable.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

The complete transcripts of recorded staff comments were prepared in two forms. First, the full comments of each focus group were assembled under the headings of each prescribed topic areas. Secondly, the full comments for each topic area as recorded from all of the focus groups were assembled.

Overall, the comments were very variable in terms of their usefulness. There were major differences in the way comments from different focus groups were recorded. At one extreme, comments consisted of one or two word statements that require an interpretive assumption on the part of the reader. At the other extreme, comments have

been written as coherent statements with no ambiguity. In summarising the comments to gain a meaningful picture of staff opinion on the issues addressed, a reasonable degree of assumption has been taken with some of the more cryptic comments. Where ambiguity remained, reference to the comment has been omitted.

Despite this variation in the way the staff comments were recorded, it is useful to look at the extent of response from each focus group on each of the topic areas, and the extent of response overall to the issues raised by the facilitators. A measure of the extent of response can be gained by totalling the number of discrete comments made by each focus group on each topic. This is summarised in Table A.2. While it would be misleading to read too much into these data, they do indicate which staff groups were responsible for the majority of comments on each of the topics.

A total of 950 discrete comments were recorded from the 230 participating staff at the 21 focus groups. 765 (81%) came from the academic staff of the various departmental focus groups, 185 (19%) came from the three General Staff focus groups. Of the academic staff focus groups, two groups, Accountancy, Law and Finance, and Nursing, each contributed over 10% of the comments. Otherwise, the spread of comments in total was reasonably even across the institution.

Of the individual topic areas, two attracted a significantly higher level of recorded response than the others: Staff Profile (190 comments – 20%) and Physical Environment (180 comments – 19%). At the other end of the scale, the topics Research (94 comments – 10%) and Industry and Employer Relations (80 comments – 8%) generated a lower than average response.

A scan of the concentration of recorded comments of each focus group on each of the major topics indicates a widespread apparent interest, with no obvious pattern emerging.

Table A.2   Number of responses and percentage of responses from each focus group on each of the major topic areas

FOCUS GROUP	No. of Staff	No. of RESPONSES – MAJOR TOPIC AREAS							Total
		Teach Learn	Res'ch	Progs Quals	Ind'try	Stud Profile	Staff Profile	Phys Env	
General Staff	42	40		14	11	38	43	39	185
Construction	15		8	3	6	8	11	8	44
Performing Arts	3			5			3	7	15
Applied Management	17	10	4	8	12	13	10	6	63
Acc Law and Finance	19	15	17	16	14	13	17	17	109
Communications	16	14	6	4		8	16	2	50
Building	14				2	2	9	5	18
Horticulture	8	13	5	7	3	3	6	10	47
Civil and Env Eng	8		3			2	13	4	22
Office Admin	5	6	2	4	2	5	3	2	24
Architecture	14	4	7	12		16	6	18	63
Community Studies	6	4	2	5	5		6	10	32
Education	10	2	4	19		6	8	4	43
Puukenga*	5								0
Health Science	8	5	5	3	6	1	14	8	42
Info Systems	14		9	7	7	3	5	5	36
Nursing	14	18	14	10	9	13	17	24	105
Tourism	5	10	3	2	3	2	3	11	34
Languages	7	3	5	10					18
Totals	230	144	94	129	80	133	180	190	950

FOCUS GROUP	% of Staff	% of RESPONSES – MAJOR TOPIC AREAS							Ave
		Teach Learn	Res'ch	Progs Quals	Ind'try	Stud Profile	Staff Profile	Phys Env	
General Staff	18%	28%		11%	14%	29%	23%	22%	19%
Construction	7%		9%	2%	8%	6%	6%	4%	5%
Performing Arts	1%			4%			2%	4%	2%
Applied Management	7%	7%	4%	6%	15%	10%	5%	3%	7%
Acc Law and Finance	8%	10%	18%	12%	18%	10%	9%	9%	11%
Communications	7%	10%	6%	3%		6%	8%	1%	5%
Building	7%				3%	2%	5%	3%	2%
Horticulture	3%	9%	5%	5%	4%	2%	3%	6%	5%
Civil and Env Eng	3%		3%			2%	7%	2%	2%
Office Admin	2%	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%	2%	1%	3%
Architecture	7%	3%	7%	9%		12%	3%	10%	7%
Community Studies	2%	3%	2%	4%	6%		3%	6%	3%
Education	4%	1%	4%	15%		5%	4%	2%	5%
Puukenga*	2%								
Health Science	3%	3%	5%	2%	8%	1%	7%	4%	4%
Info Systems	7%		10%	5%	9%	2%	3%	3%	4%
Nursing	7%	13%	15%	8%	11%	10%	9%	13%	10%
Tourism	2%	7%	3%	2%	4%	2%	2%	6%	4%
Languages	3%	2%	5%	8%					2%
Totals	100%	15%	10%	14%	8%	14%	20%	19%	100%

*   Comments from the staff of Puukenga, UNITEC's Maori Studies Department, while significant, were not directly relevant to any of the major topic areas, thus the nil responses in each column.

Some focus groups have recorded comment on all the topic areas, while others have been quite selective in the areas in which they wished to express their views. However, care needs to be taken in the interpretation of the data in this regard, and the variation may well be due as much to the ways in which different facilitators approached their task as to any apparent concentration of interest of each focus group. A particular case is that of Puukenga, UNITEC's Maori Studies Department. Staff from this department made a range of comments about UNITEC's planned transition to university status, all associated with the perceived implications for Maori staff and students, rather than addressing the major topic areas. Their responses have therefore not been taken into account in the summaries to follow.

SUMMARY OF THEMES FROM EACH MAJOR TOPIC AREA

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning were clearly identified as a cornerstone of UNITEC's distinctive purpose, both currently and as a future university of technology. Staff recognised the prime importance of teaching and the need to 'be distinctive by being a teaching university'. Within this fundamental perspective there were numerous comments which addressed the form and approach to teaching and learning at UNITEC, and others which addressed matters of quality and excellence. Overall, staff comments can be grouped under three headings.

1. Teaching/learning style

    Numerous comments emphasised the importance of a focus on student-centred learning rather than teacher-centred lecturing commonly associated with the traditional university. Staff believed that UNITEC's emphasis should be on small-class tuition that was personalised and driven by student ('customer') needs. Interactive teaching (for example, case study and problem-based learning) was emphasised, as was the need to utilise student experience in the learning process, especially given that so many of UNITEC's students are part-time, and already in the work-force.

    Numerous comments reflected the importance of technology in creating a flexible and interactive learning environment. Staff emphasised the need for greater computer access, both on and off campus, and for widespread Internet

and e-mail access.

Given the reasonable spread of comments across the focus groups, and across the topic areas, it is felt that the overall results of the consultation process can be regarded as representative of staff opinion at UNITEC. A summary of this opinion for each of the major topic areas is presented in the sections to follow.

There were also frequent comments on the need to create a genuine multicultural, and specifically in many instances, a bicultural approach to teaching and learning; this to recognise both the increasing internationalisation of the campus, and the particular importance of Maori at UNITEC. Many comments also emphasised the potential for distinctiveness by having strong learning support services that had a particular focus on the needs of Maori and Pacific Island students.

2.   Quality

Staff were explicit in their support for high quality and excellence in teaching and learning at UNITEC. There was a general recognition of the need for UNITEC to develop a reputation for the quality of its teaching, in contrast to popular notions about traditional university teaching, and that this should not be lost with university status.

Several staff commented on the importance of student evaluations of lecturers as a key means of managing quality, and supported the establishment of rewards for excellence and sanctions for poor performance. There was also a consistent call for more staff development opportunities for lecturers, and for sabbaticals and other professional development opportunities. Interestingly there were conflicting views on the need for higher qualifications for staff. While some staff regarded higher qualifications as essential for teaching in a university environment, others questioned this, especially the need for doctorates.

3.   Approach

Staff were consistent in their belief that, as a distinctive university of technology, UNITEC should focus on applied teaching and learning with a strong emphasis on practical application. To this end, many staff comments related to the importance of students undertaking credit bearing industry 'internships' which required an extended period in the work environment. There were also frequent comments reflecting the importance of teaching being up-to-date and reflecting current industry needs and practice. Overall, a work-related teaching and learning environment was considered an essential ingredient for UNITEC in its drive to become a distinctive kind of university.

In summary, staff comments on the role and place of teaching and learning at UNITEC

as a distinctive university of technology indicate that teaching and learning should:

- be student-centred with an emphasis on personalised, interactive small-group activity;

- utilise technology to achieve flexibility and choice for students;

- respond to the varied cultural needs of a diverse student body;

- be based on a commitment to learning quality facilitated by appropriately qualified staff; and

- be applied and based on current industry needs and practices.

Research

Overall, there was a clear recognition that research activity was essential for UNITEC's future recognition as a university. Indeed, the vast majority of comments assumed that research should be part of the institute's culture, and were more concerned with how that should occur, not whether it should occur. Four major themes emerged from the analysis of staff comments on research.

1.   The teaching – research nexus

Staff were clearly of the opinion that research should be undertaken to support quality teaching at UNITEC, and not be a means towards its own end. Demonstrating this important relationship was seen to be a critical responsibility of the institution. Typical comments were that UNITEC should not attempt to be a 'research university', and that research activity must not be at the expense of quality teaching and learning.

Postgraduate student research was seen as essential to the research development of the institution. Comment focused on the type of research that postgraduate students should be engaged in. There was a clear predilection for student research activity to focus on 'problem-based industry research' and 'consumer-oriented research', thus mirroring the research focus of staff. While opinion on the place of doctorates at UNITEC was divided (see later under *Programmes and Qualifications*), there was a clear view from some staff that UNITEC should consider offering 'professional doctorates' in preference to traditional PhDs to emphasise this important point of distinction.

2.   What kind of research?

There was a very clear opinion that, to create a clear point of differentiation with traditional universities, UNITEC's research should be applied in nature. In

particular, it was seen to be important that this research was 'valuable to industry, valuable to the community, and valuable to student learning'. However, some staff commented that they were unclear what 'applied' research actually meant, or suggested that the distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' research was fallacious.

3.   Measuring research activity

Staff were particularly concerned with the quality of UNITEC's research, and the resultant credibility of the institution. This concern was reflected in the assertion that UNITEC should not concentrate on research at the expense of teaching, but that the research undertaken should never the less be of a standard to foster the institution's overall reputation. Comments also addressed the need to evaluate UNITEC's research outputs from a quality perspective and not to concentrate entirely on quantitative measures of research output performance. There was also a clear view that the development of a strong research culture within the institution had a 'long gestation period' and that this could not be accelerated artificially.

4.   Structure and support

Not surprisingly, this general area attracted the most comments. Staff expressed concern about the lack of time and resources available for research, and the importance of gaining external funding. On this same theme, staff looked to UNITEC to provide incentives and/or rewards for research and to consider the introduction of a sabbatical concept similar to that operating in most existing universities. The importance of the library as a critical research resource was frequently mentioned. Structural and organisational suggestions were also made, such as the establishment of cross-discipline industry-related research centres and a corporate 'research office'. Overall, staff comments on the structure and support for research at UNITEC tended to be consistent with rather than distinctive from those practices in existing New Zealand universities.

In summary, staff comments on the role and place of research at UNITEC as a distinctive university of technology indicate that research activity should be:

- undertaken by staff for the prime purpose of supporting and informing high quality, relevant teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate level;

- applied in nature, and inclusive in scope and definition, addressing real problems for the benefit of industry and the wider community;

- underpinned by administrative support that ensures that research activity is appropriately resourced, monitored, recorded and demonstrated; and

- undertaken with full accountability measures utilising outputs that reflect quality as well as quantity.

Programmes and Qualifications

Staff comments on programmes and qualifications can be grouped under four headings.

1. Range of qualifications

There was very strong staff agreement across all focus groups for UNITEC to promote multi-level qualifications that allow students to 'staircase' from one qualification to another as their abilities and confidence determine. There was also strong support for the concept of 'exit qualifications' whereby students may complete a period of structured study with an intermediate qualification, and then return at a later date and build on that qualification to achieve one at a higher level. Both of these initiatives were seen to be significant differentiators for the institution.

However, staff were somewhat divided on whether UNITEC should continue to offer the full range of qualifications from National Qualifications Framework Level 4[2] certificates through to Level 8 postgraduate qualifications. For some it was an unequivocal 'no certificates to be taught at the university of technology', but for the majority there was a desire to see certificates and diplomas continuing along side degrees to emphasise the institute's distinctiveness.

2. The curriculum

There was very strong accord from staff that the programmes UNITEC offers should be applied and vocational in nature. Many focus groups stressed the need for industry relevance and the importance of working with industry in programme development. Several comments went as far as to suggest that UNITEC should not offer traditional arts and science programmes at all (unless, presumably, they had some sort of vocational focus). Staff also commented on the need for UNITEC to build on its existing strengths of applied education, and not to become a 'poor cousin' to the traditional universities by offering the same sorts of courses.

The links with industry were emphasised by many focus groups in terms of the need to establish co-operative education as an essential component of all qualifications.

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[2] The National Qualifications Framework has 8 levels. Levels 1 to 3 are essentially the domain of the compulsory sector. Levels 4 and 5 can be loosely related to certificate qualifications, levels 5 and 6 to diplomas, and level 7 to undergraduate degrees. Level 8 is reserved for postgraduate qualifications.

3. Reputation

The need for UNITEC to preserve and foster the reputation of its qualifications was emphasised in many comments. There was some concern that UNITEC had too many qualifications and was continuing to develop new ones when the existing ones had not become established in the marketplace. The establishment of an international reputation was seen as essential for the institute in terms of its university aspirations, and the development of programmes that will endure and have some recognised longevity was considered essential in this regard.

The reputation of the institute's qualifications was also emphasised in terms of graduate outcomes. Comments stressed the need for graduates who were flexible, work-ready and had the skills and knowledge for employment. Once again the importance of industry and employer recognition was seen to be of paramount importance. Several comments stressed that UNITEC programmes should be recognised for providing continuing professional development opportunities for mid-career employees.

4. Postgraduate qualifications

Opinion on the place of postgraduate programmes in UNITEC's range of qualifications was mixed. The vast majority of comments in this area supported UNITEC's expansion into the postgraduate area, especially postgraduate diplomas and masters programmes, but opinion was divided on the place of doctorates at the institution. Opinion ranged from no PhD degrees at UNITEC through to a recognition that their development was inevitable. There was a significant level of comment supporting the development of the 'professional doctorate' at UNITEC either instead of PhDs, or in addition to them, to emphasise the distinctive nature of the institution's approach to its qualifications.

In summary, staff comments on the role and place of programmes and qualifications at UNITEC as a distinctive university of technology indicate that programmes should:

- Cover the full range of qualifications from certificates to postgraduate degrees, including doctorates;

- Provide students with opportunities to enter formal programmes of learning at levels commensurate with their ability, and exit with qualifications appropriate to their achievement;

- be applied and vocational in nature with strong links to industry; and

- promote employment-related skills and knowledge, work-readiness, and

career progression for graduates.

Relationships with Employers and Industry

There was widespread support for UNITEC to continue to foster close relationships with industry and employers. Indeed such relationships were seen as an existing essential and distinctive characteristic of the institution. Comments can be grouped into three main areas.

1. Benefits to industry/employers

   Staff emphasised the importance of identifying the key benefits for industry that UNITEC can generate. At the most fundamental level these relate to the provision of skilled work-ready graduates that employers recognise as their first choice for employment. This matter is further addressed under the section on programmes and qualifications.

   In addition, several focus groups mentioned the importance of developing partnerships with industry for research, consultancy and training projects in which UNITEC staff can support industry with tailor-made solutions to industry problems. There were also several comments indicating that UNITEC should provide more recruitment support for potential employers of the institute's graduates.

2. Benefits to UNITEC

   A primary benefit of a close relationship with industry was seen to be in the development of new programmes and the maintenance of the currency of existing programmes. Also the role of industry in providing examples of current practice through case studies and guest lecturers was seen to be essential to UNITEC's ability to maintain relevance and application of its programmes as a point of distinction.

   Many staff also commented on the potential support that industry could provide UNITEC in terms of sponsorship and the provision of scholarships for students.

3. Means of further developing industry relationships

   Many comments stressed the importance of the institute's advisory committees and the need to improve these as a primary means of two-way communication. Advisory Committees were seen as a prime source of advice on new and existing programme development.

   The active involvement of staff in professional and industry organisations was

seen as an important means of improving relationships with industry. Similarly, the development of an 'industry sabbatical' concept was promoted by some focus groups as an important means of maintaining staff currency of practice, seen as a significant point of distinction from existing universities.

In summary, staff comments on UNITEC's relationship with industry and employers as a distinctive university of technology indicate that relationships with industry should:

- promote UNITEC graduates as first choice for employment;

- be fostered through active advisory committees and the interaction of UNITEC staff and industry in a range of settings; and

- benefit both UNITEC and industry through collaborative activity.

Student Profile

Staff opinion on the student profile for UNITEC as a distinctive university of technology focused on three issues, the sort of students that UNITEC should attract, the services that the institution should provide for them, and the qualities of the graduating student.

1.   The sort of students

A high proportion of comments supported the importance of the more mature student as a key member of the institution's distinctive learning community. These students would generally have several years' work experience, and be looking for a career enhancement or change. Comments particularly referred to the importance of flexible part-time study for this student group. The recruitment of school leavers was mentioned only indirectly, with the acknowledgement that UNITEC will inevitably have a very wide range of students from an age and maturity perspective.

Most focus groups stressed the importance of a multicultural campus, with a particular emphasis on Maori and Pacific Island students. The need to increase the participation, retention and success of Maori students in particular was a frequent comment. Views on international students were mixed. Most comments favoured an international campus, but there was some concern that the percentage of international students be limited.

In general, there were numerous comments about the general attributes of a UNITEC student. While several focus groups advocated no entry barriers, they also expected an acceptable standard of literacy, numeracy and computer skills. In this context there were also several responses that advocated the importance

of skills-based as well as knowledge-based students on campus. This supports views expressed under the *programmes and qualifications* topic area that UNITEC should provide education and staircasing opportunities at all levels from certificate to postgraduate degree.

2.   Student services

There were frequent comments about the need to provide services and amenities to suit the more mature student, and not just the school leaver. Counselling and financial advice and support (including scholarships) were mentioned by more than one focus group. There were also several comments about the need for postgraduate research facilities for students.

There were also a number of staff comments indicating that UNITEC should treat its students 'as people', and not just as EFTS (Equivalent Full Time Students) or income to the institute. This was expressed by one focus group in terms of a concern that, if UNITEC becomes a university, it may in fact lose students who would otherwise attend the institution.

3.   The graduating student

Comment on the nature of the UNITEC graduate mirrored that expressed under the programmes and qualifications topic area. It was stressed that UNITEC graduates should be distinctive by being work-ready, articulate and able to cope with change. They should also have well honed people skills and strategies for learning for life. Staff expected them to be able to get the jobs they wanted and to be sought after by industry.

In summary, staff comments on UNITEC's student profile as a distinctive university of technology indicate that UNITEC's student profile should:

- emphasise the mature age student in a multicultural environment;

- provide special encouragement for Maori participation and success; and

- promote graduates with employment and life skills sought by industry

Staff Profile

Perhaps not surprisingly, staff made more comments on this topic than any other. However, a proportion of these comments were of the nature of a wish list for perceived better conditions of employment rather than commentary on those elements of the staff profile that would enhance UNITEC's distinctiveness. The relevant comments fell into two broad areas.

1.   Staff characteristics

Three principal characteristics of academic staff at UNITEC that made the institution distinctive were emphasised by most of the focus groups. These related to qualifications, industry experience and teaching ability. Staff generally saw higher academic qualifications as essential for the academic staff of UNITEC as a university of technology, especially for those staff teaching at a postgraduate level. There was therefore general support for the notion of existing staff upgrading their qualifications, and for this to be supported by the institute as a prime form of professional development. However, there were a number of comments indicating that academic qualifications were not enough, and that industry experience was equally important.

There were more comments supporting the importance of industry experience for academic staff than any other issue raised. Comments invariably emphasised the importance of new teaching staff having current relevant work experience, and equally, the importance of existing staff having the opportunity to remain current in the area of their professional expertise. This should be achieved by staff maintaining their external links with industry through active professional memberships and consultancy, and by having the opportunity to return to industry to retain their currency.

While a high degree of importance was given to academic qualifications and to industry experience, staff comments also emphasised the over-riding importance of the teaching ability of academic staff. There was a consistent theme of comments supporting the need for staff training in this area.

In addition to the three primary characteristics of the academic staff outlined above, there were numerous comments from the focus groups about more general characteristics of UNITEC staff. These included the need for staff to be good communicators, to be entrepreneurial, customer-focused, and team players. Also UNITEC staff needed to reflect the cultural mix of the student population and to understand and support the needs of different cultural groups.

2.   Conditions of employment

Not unexpectedly, there were widespread comments about conditions of employment for staff at UNITEC. The issue of professional development and staff training has been mentioned above, and under other topic headings. Staff clearly regard this as essential to their progress and therefore to that of the institution.

Another recurrent theme was the concern about inadequacies of resources, and the lack of time to achieve quality outcomes in teaching, programme development and research at the same time. In this regard, many comments

proposed the introduction of a form of refresher leave or sabbatical for academic staff as a key means of maintaining academic and industry currency, and progressing research.

Some staff expressed concerns about the overt managerial culture that they saw as dominant at UNITEC. A move to a more 'academic' culture was seen to be an important element of being a university, but not necessarily one that would make UNITEC more distinctive. There were also some suggestions that senior management should seek to achieve a greater gender and ethnic balance than it currently has.

In summary, staff comments on UNITEC's staff profile as a distinctive university of technology indicate that UNITEC's staff should

- be postgraduate-qualified for teaching at advanced levels;
- have current industry work experience and understanding;
- be excellent teachers;
- be well supported with adequate resources; and
- have a wide range of professional development opportunities, including access to refresher leave.

Physical Environment

Staff comments on the physical environment can be grouped under two main headings: the teaching/learning environment, and the general nature of the campus.

1.   The teaching/learning environment

Staff felt strongly that UNITEC should develop further medium to small teaching spaces rather than large lecture theatres, and that this would constitute a significant point of departure from the kind of teaching spaces commonly found in traditional universities. However, there was also comment supporting the need for less formal classroom spaces, and the provision of more computer-based facilities. The increasing need for student access to computers, and for more technology driven teaching/learning, was frequently mentioned, including the importance of off-campus access to learning materials.

The library was highlighted by most focus groups as a critical teaching/learning facility. There was extensive comment supporting its enlargement, and an increase in its resources. In particular, several focus groups commented on the need for greater library provision for postgraduate students in terms of space and research resources.

Staff also commented on the need for improved student spaces in the form of informal study rooms, student common rooms (associated with each faculty), and student research spaces, especially for postgraduate students.

2.   The general nature of the campus

There was widespread support for the maintenance of the 'green belts' of the UNITEC campus, and for UNITEC to develop further as a 'green' environmentally friendly university. This was considered to be a potential market advantage that UNITEC should further develop. On this subject, there was considerable comment on the use of this green space for car parks, with the need for more car parks identified by several focus groups, while others expressed concern that they were destroying the park-like campus environment.

Staff made a variety of comments about general amenities that a mature university campus should have. These included a student/staff bar, an information kiosk, a range of retail outlets, a staff/student common room, and improved sports facilities, including a swimming pool. Many of these facilities would contribute to the development of a campus 'heart', but would not, in themselves, differentiate the institution, just improve it.

In summary, staff comments on UNITEC's physical environment as a distinctive university of technology indicate that UNITEC's physical environment should

- promote small group learning;

- provide extensive computer access for students;

- have a first-class library and research facilities;

- retain its park-like campus; and

- provide a range of 'university' facilities at the heart of the campus.

DISCUSSION

The staff consultation process described in the preceding sections provided a reasonably full picture of staff opinion of what UNITEC should look like as a distinctive university of technology. Incidentally, but just as importantly, perhaps, it provided staff with an opportunity to discuss this topic in a structured and inclusive way, and thereby to feel some sense of involvement in the institute's direction and ultimate destination. There were, however, a number of aspects of the investigation which limited the value of the

emergent staff opinion of a university of technology but, somewhat paradoxically, enhanced the value of the process that was engaged to achieve it.

Principally, there was a slight tendency for staff to use the focus group sessions as opportunities to complain about aspects of life at UNITEC that they did not like, rather than objectively articulate a vision of what UNITEC should look like as a university of technology. What emerged, therefore, was an amalgam of genuine commentary on the form of a future university of a special nature, intermingled with a wish-list of the sort of institution that staff wanted to work in regardless of its name. This was particularly evident in the discussions on staff profile, in which staff tended to become preoccupied with conditions of service issues in general, rather than more specifically concentrating on the staff characteristics of a distinctive university, not all of which would necessarily be agreeable to them.

This occasional lack of focus by contributing staff was, on reflection, inevitable, and in practice, very difficult to control. Indeed, from the writer's perspective as one of the focus group facilitators, too much control or redirection of staff input would have inhibited the very discussion that was being encouraged. One of the investigation's incidental benefits was that it provided UNITEC staff with the opportunity to contribute to and participate in the evolution of UNITEC towards becoming a university of technology. This was better achieved by letting discussion flow in a relatively uninhibited way within each prescribed topic area. In other words, by allowing staff to say what *they* wanted to say, rather than give them the feeling they were saying what the facilitator wanted them to say.

By contrast, the achievement of the primary objective, that of developing a coherent staff perspective of UNITEC as a distinctive university of technology, was probably adversely affected by this approach, in that the resulting picture of the university of technology described by staff was not as objective as it might have been. Notwithstanding this limitation, the picture that emerged remains a valuable reflection of staff opinion on the eight topics under discussion.

A second potential limitation of the process related to the manner in which staff comment was recorded. The original intention was that the facilitator would record the comments as the discussion proceeded, seeking confirmation of their accuracy at the time of writing. In practice, a number of approaches to recording comments were taken, including using the staff themselves to write them. This occurred particularly in large group sessions, where some facilitators divided the group into smaller groups to deal with one or two topics each, and asked each group to record its own discussions. This allowed some individuals to 'capture' the discussion and thereby produce a written summary biased towards their own views. Once the written comments were collected, it was, of course, quite impossible to distinguish personal from representative commentary on any topic.

Another related limitation of this process was the very nature of the recorded comments. As a quick perusal of the full transcripts would show, some comments are extremely cryptic, and therefore open to wide interpretation. These tended to reflect the writing style of the recorder rather than the actual content of the discussions, and when their meaning was unclear, they were ignored in the analysis. One outcome of this wide variation in recording was that focus groups with a very cryptic 'one-word' recording style (for instance, the Department of Accountancy, Law and Finance) tended to cover a wide range of issues in a superficial way, with a high degree of ambiguity, while others (such as the Education group) tended to make fewer in-depth statements on critical issues. When analysing the 950 relevant comments that emerged from the consultation process, it therefore was difficult not to give more weight to the in-depth statements than to the 'one-worders', whereas, in fact, there was no way of knowing exactly how well supported a particular written comment was amongst the group. The assumption therefore had to be made that each statement was generated by consensus, unless it was specifically recorded as a minority view.