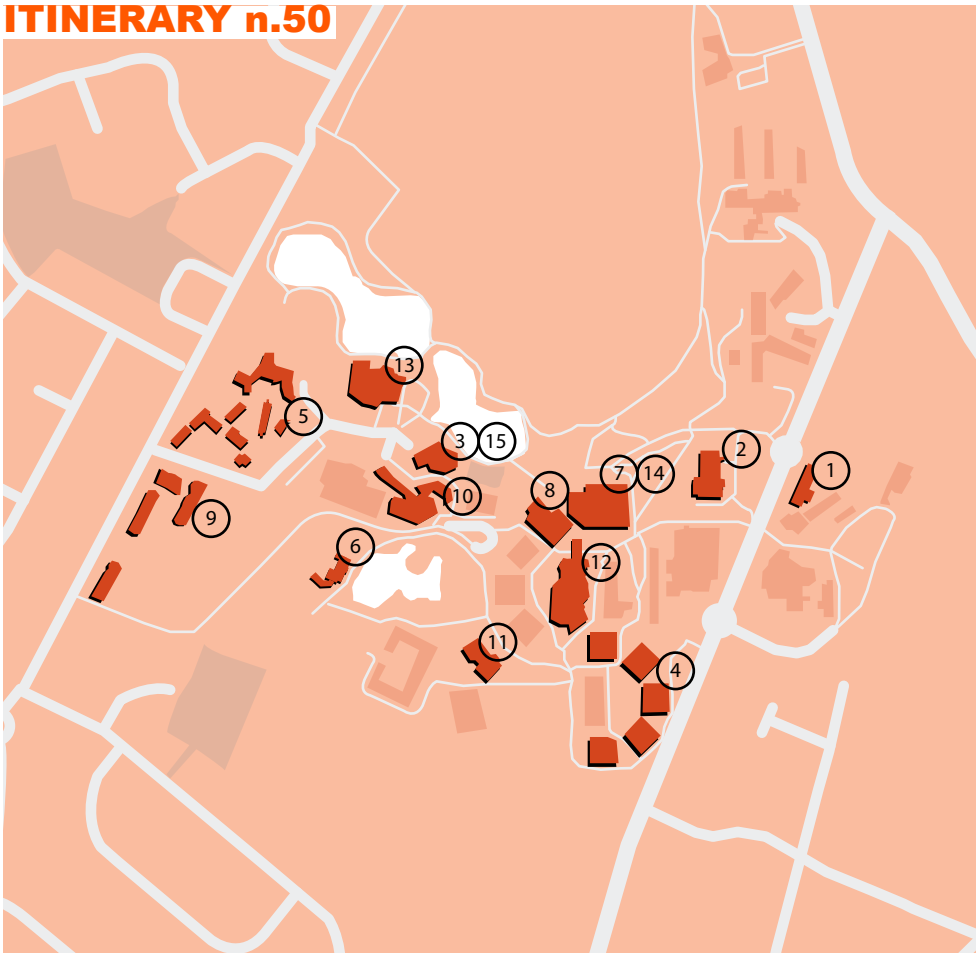


ITINERARY n.50



Language Institute

The University of Waikato is celebrating 50 years since its founding – this itinerary presents the campus' award-winning collection of buildings.

The University of Waikato 1964-2014

After serving for a time as a satellite of Auckland University, the University of Waikato was established in 1964 on what were previously 68 hectares of marshy farmland and orchards on the fringes of Hamilton. As in much of the western world, New Zealand's universities were undergoing rapid expansion as baby boomers surged through the education system. Waikato adhered to one of the key patterns being followed around the globe – a new, integrated university campus on a green field site that brought together teaching, administration, and student housing in park-like grounds. This bucolic vision of a lovely, leafy education was offset – again, as it was in many other places – by the use of hard-edged Brutalist architecture.

The Ministry of Works, led by then Assistant Government Architect J.R. Blake-Kelly, laid out a masterplan (completed in 1965) in which the academic buildings stood on the high ground, halls of residence on the low ground on the opposite side of the campus, with student facilities along the path between them. The desire for a park-like setting was fulfilled through extensive native and exotic planting, and by three artificial lakes created for reasons as much pragmatic as picturesque – draining the former swampy pastures on the site.

Functional principles guided the layout of the buildings, the most distinctive element in the campus plan being repetitive rectangular blocks laid out along interconnecting semi-circles, a arrangement that was intended to allow incremental growth within minimum disruption. More intriguing was the impact of financial constraints and the pragmatism that resulted at the level of individual buildings. Blake-Kelly was at the same time overseeing the development of Massey, Canterbury, and Otago university campuses. A number of the standardized building designs for Waikato were adapted from other MoW projects, including university blocks at Massey's Palmerston North campus and a government building in Rotorua. Here we see modernism on the verge of running wild – the MoW's Brutalist vocabulary was not only deployed uniformly across the campus in the service of consistency and integration, but in a way that began to generate uniformity across the whole country.

Buildings were added as the University grew, and Blake-Kelly's masterplan was largely followed. A concentrated building program ran through until the late 1970s, when there was something of a hiatus. With the demise of the Ministry of Works, the buildings added in recent years have been produced by architects in private practice. The arrangement of many of these has diverged from the masterplan, partly reflecting a shift in goals. The need for self-sufficiency implied in the creation of a new semi-rural campus is now moderated by a desire for interaction with the city which is growing around it. The Gallagher Performing Arts Center, for example, was explicitly designed to serve both University and community needs.

Many low-rise fibrolite buildings – presumably intended as temporary – still remain around the campus. Some of the first crop of "heroic" Brutalist buildings are now being reworked into "second generation" form, leavening their toughness with stylish renovations and additions which adapt them to contemporary demands. Warren and Mahoney's recent Student Center project added light-filled spaces around two sides of the old library – they have been respectful of the original building, updating it without erasing its original qualities. The baby boomers who entered the university in 1964 are now running the place. The campus was the product of the youthful optimism of the early 1960s, but fifty years have mellowed the architecture and developed the grounds such that all can now enjoy the pleasures of maturity. *Andrew Barrie & Taylor Chan*

1

1879
Station Café and Bar
Public Works Department,
A.E. Hill, Chow Hill



Formerly the Hamilton Railway Station, the Station Café and Bar is now a pleasant lunch spot for staff and students. The rail line from Auckland to Frankton opened in 1877. The station was built in 1879, but was closed in 1967 on completion of the underground line through central Hamilton. Then Vice-Chancellor Don Llewellyn sought to rescue the building and proposed its use as a temporary Student Union building. When this was rejected – students were bolshy in 1968 – Llewellyn had it set up as the Common Room for staff, who must presumably have been a more pliable group. The timber trussed lunch room at the rear is particularly worth exploring.

2

1967

B Block
Ministry of Works



This Ministry of Works project was apparently not created for the University, but was modified from a design for a government building erected in Rotorua – it was felt the design could be recycled as an economical solution to academic needs. Built in just one year, B Block initially stood as the campus' administrative centre and formal front door. It's four levels have accommodated a post office, banks, teaching rooms, administrative offices, and a clock tower. By the late 1970s, teaching and amenity spaces had been pushed out and the building was set aside for administrative purposes.

3

1969

Oranga
Ministry of Works



Built as the first stage of the University's catering facilities, this elevated circular dining hall seated 200 and provided them with panoramic views out over the lakes and grounds. The scheme sought to provide for growth. The design of the kitchen allowed for the addition of extra cooking equipment, and the lower level, originally open pilotis lifting the dining room into the air, was designed to be enclosed at a later stage. This plan was executed in 1976, creating a café and lounge, although this undercroft has now has been renovated into submission. The area in front building – the hub for student life on the campus – is used by local bands and performers. See *NZ Home & Building Nov. 1972*.

4

1970-1973,1989

C, D, E, F & G Blocks
Ministry of Works



Housing the Schools of Science, Technology, Computing and Mathematical Sciences, the designs for these Brutalist blocks were based on those built at Manukau Polytechnic and Massey University's Palmerston North campus. Designed by Ted Hill and Michael Graves at the MoW, these of four-storey blocks were laid out in curved rows originally intended to focus on eight-storey post-graduate research towers - these towers were never built, with low-rise labs occupying the space. The blocks are linked by stairwells intended to promote communication between the different branches of science housed in adjacent buildings.

5

1972, 1977

Halls of Residence
Ministry of Works



Produced in the main by Government Architect J.R. Blake-Kelly, the first stage of the Student Village – known as “StudVille” – consists of clusters of 6 student rooms with ablution and tea-making facilities housed within rectangular volumes, linked in pairs with a common stair, and stacked up in one-two-or three storey volumes. Male and female students originally lived on separate floors. The Kitchen, Dining and Games Block was completed in 1977 to provide facilities for Student Village residents when Oranga was incorporated into the Student Union. Expanding the language of pyramidal roofs on the adjacent dormitory buildings, the boldly sloping roofs invest the open spaces with expansiveness and dynamism. See *NZ Home & Building Nov. 1972* and *NZ Architect 2, 1981*.

6

1977

Lady Goodfellow Chapel
Malcolm McKenzie and MoW



Intended to minister the spiritual needs of the University community, The Lady Goodfellow Chapel was endowed by Sir William Goodfellow - the same person that funded the Gummer, Ford, Hoadley Budge & Gummer-designed Maclaurin Chapel (1964) at the University of Auckland. Auckland architect Malcolm McKenzie was Sir William's preferred architect, but after completing the initial concept plans he fell from grace with the University and was replaced by Michael Graves from the Ministry of Works. The building makes the most of its tranquil lakeside location, the chapel overlooking the lake. But with no fixed seating, and subdividable by folding doors, the rectangular interior feels more like a relaxed lounge than a spiritual space.

7

1977

Library (M Block)
Ministry of Works



The Library was the first university library in the country to be a single-purpose building – previous buildings had also housed academic staff and teaching space. The building was designed to be built in stages as the collection expanded, and a second stage was completed in 1994. There have been ongoing modifications, and in 2011 another major extension was completed (see listing 14). The library now has over 1 million books and serial volumes. If you have time on your hands, the New Zealand Collection is particularly extensive and worth exploring.

8

1978

L Block Lecture Theatres
Smith, Grant & Associates



Designed by Rod Smith, this building contains five lecture theatres of various sizes. Smith made cunning use of the slope of the site, the tiered seating following the slope downwards. The large common foyer similarly flows down the site, connecting to paths around the building at different levels, making the most of its strategic location between the library and the student facilities. The building apparently received an NZIA Local Award in 1978, but is presently being renovated. See *NZ Architect 2, 1981*, and *Architecture NZ Jan/Feb. 2010*.

9

1981

Bryant Hall
Leigh, de Lisle, Fraser & Smith



The perception that there was a lack of large old houses in Hamilton that might serve as cheap student flats prompted the University to provide much of its own accommodation. Housing around 200 students in three wings, the complex is focussed on a central Common Room block that includes a lounge, games room, TV room, office, and – especially civilised for 1981 – a coffee bar. See *NZ Architect 2, 1981*.

10

1981

Student Union
White & MacDonald



Built to compliment the facilities available in the Oranga Dining Hall and the student union building known as the 'Cowshed' – when the site was part of the Ruakura Animal Research Station it was in fact No.5 Dairy – this building included a series of common rooms, an exhibition area, a large events hall, and associated catering facilities. Produced by a local Hamilton firm, the design's best moments are provided by the top-lit events hall – the beefy structure and timber lining make it very much of its time, and it's easy to imagine the haze of corduroy and sideburns that must once have filled the space.
See *NZ Home & Building 2*, 1981.

11

1991

Language Institute
Robin Hannah Architects



Funded by a Japanese education company, LAIN is home for language students studying intensive courses at Waikato. Nestled amongst bamboo and redwoods on a sloped site, LAIN is quite different to the heavy concrete structures that dominate the campus. It is composed as two gabled forms, each split down the long axis by a corridor topped by a long skylight. The building was intended to have a Japanese flavour, but it is clearly much more influenced by mid-eighties American architecture. The project won an NZIA Branch Award in 1991.
See *Architecture NZ* Sept./Oct. 1991 and *NZ Home & Building* Aug./Sept. 1991.

12

1995

S Block
Chibnall Swann Architects



S Block marked a definitive move away from the University's characteristic Brutalism. Increasing enrolments created a need for new teaching facilities, and this demand was met with a building containing four lecture theatres seating approximately 400. The oppressively enclosed lecture theatres are arranged around a wide north-south promenade, this pathway running under a fly-away roof propped up on ten steel "trees". This structure incorporates Maori carvings on the frames and columns, resulting in an intriguingly beefy, kiwified version of "hi-tech". The building received an NZIA Branch Award in 1999, and another in 2007 when it was extended.
See *Architecture NZ* March/April 1999 and Jan./Feb. 2008.

13

2001

Gallagher Academy of
Performing Arts
Meritec / Warren & Mahoney



Formerly the WEL Energy Trust Academy of Performing Arts, the building is now sponsored by famed electric fence manufacturer Gallagher. It serves dual roles as a community arts venue and providing facilities for the University's music, theatre, dance, and Maori performing arts programmes. Housed in a series of dynamic volumes arranged beside the lake, the complex includes a 350-seat concert auditorium, a 150-seat drama theatre, the Whare Tapere Iti for Maori performing arts, and a dance studio. The building received NZ Property Council Supreme Award in 2001 and an NZIA Architecture Award in 2002.
See *Architecture NZ* Sept./Oct. 2001 and Jan./Feb. 2002.

14

2011

Student Centre
AECOM / Warren & Mahoney



The Library, which when completed in 1977 must have been among NZ's last Brutalist buildings, has been wrapped around two sides by new circulation and amenity spaces, one face skinned with dramatic brise-soleil. Perhaps it not surprising that WAM, a firm that produced some of the nation's best Brutalist work, has been respectful of the original building, updating it without erasing its original qualities. The project received five Green Stars, and was the winner of Property Council Award in 2012 and an NZIA Branch Award in 2013.
See *Architecture NZ* March/April 2012.

15

2011

U-Leisure Fit-out
MOAA Architects



This interior project, which occupies what was once the Oranga Dining Hall received an NZIA Branch Award in 2011. The citation read, "A fresh, contemporary and colourful interior, appropriate to its youthful inhabitants, has been set within a 1960s Waikato University building, retaining the original circular floor plan and timber ceiling. Plywood cabinetry and bespoke desks combine well with the solid, oak-framed partitioned spaces inserted within the fitout. The Architect has pitched the design perfectly to the purposes of the facility, a joint venture between the University and the Student Union."



Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts



Halls of Residence

Sources:

Many thanks to Matt Grant and Ann McEwan for their assistance in researching this guide. Except where noted, photos were taken by Taylor Chan or Andrew Barrie. Many of the buildings on the University campus appeared in the journals of the day. The most useful general source is Ann McEwan's *Cast in Concrete: The Architecture of the University of Waikato 1964-2004* (Hamilton: Univ. of Waikato, 2004). Fans might also look up Paul Day's *From the Ground Up: An Informal Chronicle of the Genesis and Development of the University of Waikato, 1964-1984* (Hamilton: Univ. of Waikato, 1984). See also Ann McEwan's entry in Julia Gattley's *Long Live the Modern* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), Ann McEwan's "Branded by Brutalism" in *Architecture NZ* Sept/Oct. 2005, and an article about the masterplan in *NZ Architect 2*, 1981.