

A FUTURE IN  
**HEALTH & PHYSICAL  
EDUCATION**





## WHAT IS HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION ALL ABOUT?

Transform the lives of young people as a health and physical education (HPE) professional. HPE teachers and professionals provide opportunities for learning in, through, and about movement, often using games to teach personal and interpersonal skills. Students learn the science behind how we move by engaging in diverse physical activities that develop skills and learning strategies.

HPE teachers and professionals also engage young people in critical thinking about health and movement-related issues. They guide students to explore wellbeing and encourage them to contribute to healthy communities and environments. For example, designing a lesson where students analyse different fitness programmes, evaluate their effectiveness and question how cultural norms and commercial interests shape ideas about what it means to be 'fit' or 'healthy'.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, HPE takes a bi-cultural approach that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This includes integrating Māori concepts such as hauora (a holistic model of wellbeing), whanaungatanga

(relationships and connectedness), and te ao kori (the world of movement) into learning experiences.

Key areas of learning in the HPE curriculum are physical activity, outdoor education, sports studies, food and nutrition, mental health education, body care and physical safety, and relationships and sexuality education. Topics include Ngā Tonga Tākora (Māori games), alcohol and drug education, leadership in sport, body image and diversity, sports science, environmental sustainability, and place-responsive learning in the outdoors.

Other career opportunities include working in youth health promotion, instructing in outdoor education settings or teaching in overseas schools.

Do you want to help young people be active, appreciate movement and wellbeing, and think positively about the importance of a healthy body, mind and community? Are you good at communicating, organising, designing and facilitating learning? Then a career in health education and physical education may be a smart choice for you.

## OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

### **Culturally responsive and bicultural approaches** –

There is growing recognition of the need for HPE to reflect the diverse identities and experiences of students. Mātauranga Māori and Te Ao Māori perspectives are becoming more embedded, ensuring movement and health education is inclusive, relevant and responsive to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This shift fosters practices that prioritise whanaungatanga (relationships) and manaakitanga (care) to create more meaningful and equitable learning experiences.

**Use of technology in HPE** – Wearable technology, digital fitness platforms, AI and data-driven approaches are increasingly used in HPE settings to explore movement, monitor wellbeing and personalise learning experiences. When used appropriately, these tools enhance student engagement and provide insights into physical activity and wellbeing patterns.

**Growing focus on holistic wellbeing** – HPE has a growing focus on holistic wellbeing, with a strong emphasis on Hauora – a Māori model of wellbeing that considers physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions. Schools and communities are integrating

more wellbeing-focused initiatives, recognising the connection between physical activity, mental health and social development.

### **Decline in young people's physical activity levels** –

Increased screen time, changing lifestyle habits, and socio-economic barriers are contributing to reduced participation and a decline in young people's physical activity. Many children and adolescents don't meet recommended activity guidelines, which impacts their physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Recent initiatives such as Healthy Active Learning, a collaborative initiative between Sport New Zealand, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, are helping schools address this crucial issue.

**Middle and senior management in schools** – Senior roles in education require teachers who are good communicators with a holistic view of wellbeing, leadership capability, and an interest in lifelong learning. A growing number of HPE teachers are moving into school leadership and management after gaining higher qualifications in leadership and management.

## WORK SETTINGS

HPE graduates commonly find careers in high schools, but there are also increasing opportunities in primary and intermediate schools and other physical activity and wellbeing settings for HPE specialists.

It is mandatory for HPE graduates wishing to teach in NZ schools to undertake the Graduate Diploma in Secondary Teaching or Master of Teaching and Learning (Primary or Secondary) after completing their undergraduate degree. Both are offered at AUT.

There are many other roles for graduates who want to work with young people in the physical activity and wellbeing setting. Roles include education advisors for national or regional sporting trusts and organisations, kaiwhakahaere at kōhanga/puna reo, school coach developers, sports coordinators or healthy active learning advisors.

## CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES

**Health and PE secondary school teacher** – Supports students' physical, mental, and social well-being through curriculum-based learning. Plans and delivers engaging lessons aligned with the New Zealand Curriculum, integrating movement, health literacy and socio-critical perspectives to develop essential life skills. Includes preparing, designing and marking assessments. Pastoral responsibilities include managing form classes and supporting student well-being. Extracurricular activities include coaching sports teams, leading outdoor education camps and facilitating extracurricular activities.

**Primary/Intermediate school teacher** – Plans and prepares topics, units, lessons and activities across the eight curriculum learning areas, tailoring learning experiences to students' needs and ensuring a balanced approach to learning. Also involved in extracurricular activities. May have a specialist role supporting students' physical development and promoting active learning across the school, focusing on movement, well-being and fundamental physical skills.

**Sports director/coordinator in schools** – Promotes and organises sports within the school. Oversees the co-curricular sports programme, managing school teams, coaching and coordinating events. Includes organising training schedules, managing equipment, liaising with coaches and community sports organisations, and facilitating field trips or tournaments.

**Youth sports development officer** – Works for a national (NSO) or regional (RSO) sports organisation to grow participation and engagement in youth sports by developing coaching programmes, supporting clubs and schools, and fostering youth involvement. Includes organising events, managing funding applications, developing coaching resources and supporting volunteers.

**Kaiwhakahaere** – Oversees and coordinates programmes, people, or initiatives within an organisation, often with a strong kaupapa Māori focus. Based at schools, community organisations or sports trusts, ensuring programmes align with mātauranga Māori, tikanga, and the aspirations of whānau, hapū, and iwi. May involve strategic planning,

partnership building, and funding management. Ensures initiatives reflect manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and kaupapa tuku iho (inherited principles and values).

**Recreation coordinator** – Works with community groups and individuals, including school students. Plans and manages community leisure programmes and events, including school holiday programmes. May prepare budgets, write proposals, run centres, and advise on health and physical activity-related issues.

**Health promoter/advisor to schools** – Sets up and coordinates health promotion programmes, advocates and lobbies for health promotion causes within schools and surrounding community groups. May also develop and manage health promotion programmes, research, write submissions, manage and evaluate reports.

## SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- Understand the Health and Physical Education curriculum within NZ schools and its relevance to NZ culture
- Have knowledge and skills in health and physical education, including HPE pedagogy suitable for all levels
- Understand and be able to develop needs-based programmes in health and physical education suitable for schools
- Understand management principles and legal issues relevant to sport and recreation
- Work collaboratively and communicate effectively across all ages
- Be critical consumers of research within the education, health, sport and recreation context

## PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Self-directed, reflective lifelong learner
- Critical thinker
- Creative problem solver
- Able to think and act professionally

## PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

Primary and secondary teacher graduates apply to the Education Council of New Zealand for provisional registration and a practising certificate. They then teach as a provisionally registered teacher for at least two years to be able to gain full registration. Mentoring and support is provided for beginning teachers.

## FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Further postgraduate study is available through the AUT Master of Sport, Exercise and Health under the Health and Physical Education specialisation.

Students wanting to teach must complete the Graduate Diploma in Secondary Teaching or a Master of Teaching and Learning (Primary or Secondary) after completing their undergraduate degree.

Research areas include skill acquisition, performance analysis, teacher identity and body pedagogies.

## TEACHER SALARIES

Most teachers pay is directly linked to relevant national employment agreements. Postgraduate subject or specialist qualifications start on a higher salary.

Salaries go up automatically every year for seven years if the teacher meets the Education Council of New Zealand registration criteria.

## SALARY GUIDE

NZ teacher salaries are negotiated in a collective agreement every 3 years. The current agreements are up for renewal mid-2025.

	Salary (per year)
Beginning secondary teacher (up to 7 years)	\$64,083–\$103,086 (bachelor's degree, plus recognised teaching qualification)
Beginning primary teacher (up to 7 years)	\$64,063–\$97,920 (bachelor's degree, plus recognised teaching qualification)
Healthy active learning advisor	\$70,000–\$100,000+

This information was accurate at the time of publication (early 2025) and should only be used as a guideline.

Find the most up-to-date salary data by visiting sites, including:

### PPTA

[ppta.org.nz](http://ppta.org.nz)

### NZEI

Primary Teachers' Collective Agreement 2023–2025

### Careers NZ

[careers.govt.nz/jobs-database](http://careers.govt.nz/jobs-database)

## THE AUT APPROACH

Closely aligned with AUT's graduate teacher training programmes, the HPE major develops the theoretical and practical expertise needed for a career in education.

In their final year, HPE students do two work-integrated placements in educational environments. They gain firsthand experience alongside teachers by coaching sports teams, leading lunchtime activities, assisting with field trips and outdoor camps, and engaging with real-world teaching and learning.

Alternatively, some students work with community initiatives such as youth leadership programmes, adaptive sport and recreation projects, or health-focused organisations promoting active lifestyles..

# JOHN FAAUMU

PE and Health teacher at Otahuhu College

Bachelor of Sport and Recreation in Health and PE –  
Graduate Diploma in Secondary Teaching

"I became a teacher because I wanted to be a positive influence and always had an interest in physical activity and wellbeing. I started an Exercise Science major but I found while doing coaching papers that I really enjoyed sharing knowledge with young people, so I decided to try teaching.

I love seeing the intangible awards of students achieving and celebrating the small wins of students navigating their journey to become confident learners.

There is a perception PE teachers are always outside doing physical activity, but it is much more. For instance, my Year 13 PE class has only two outside classes each week. The other three days are theory-based, including biomechanics, anatomy, interpersonal skills, sport physiology, sociocultural factors, movement, analysis, training principles, and leadership. There is lots of report writing and assessments, etc.

Health education is holistic, focusing on Hauora (wellbeing), attitudes and values, socio-ecological perspective, and health promotion. We cover topics like resilience, bullying, sexuality, nutrition, relationships, drugs, mental health etc.

I'm fortunate to be a part of a department that is selfless in their work and support. I look forward to coming into the PE & Health staff room every morning, connecting with everyone, having a laugh, discussing learning/assessments and then applying new ideas in the classroom.

## Beginning teacher

To discover who you are as a teacher, you must understand your values. For me, coming from a Pasifika background, being Tongan, moulds me as a person. My philosophy of teaching draws upon those values.

As a new teacher, you go through a lot of emotions. I was lucky my HOD was very organised and supportive. The first weeks are all about getting your routine down, building relationships with students and staff, and not being afraid to ask questions.

And my AUT courses, such as applied anatomy, sport physiology, coaching and the HPE curriculum, helped a lot and still do.

Classroom management is important. I learned a lot by observing teachers within the department and seeking advice. It can be as simple as lining students, especially at junior school, to get their attention. It can seem old school, but it works.

Understanding students is also part of classroom management, respecting them and their space, while ensuring they recognise my boundaries."



## EMPLOYER COMMENT

"John worked alongside me as a high school teacher when I was Head of Health and Physical Education at Otāhuhu College, a multicultural kura in South Auckland.

I believe a teacher requires effective interpersonal skills to build trust and establish professional and respectful relationships with ākonga, other Kaiako and whānau. John demonstrates these attributes because he is committed to student engagement and passionate about ākonga wellbeing and success, both in class and through his involvement in extra-curricular activities.

He displays a high degree of professionalism, integrity and ambition, and can be relied upon when given responsibilities. I enjoyed mentoring John as he thrives on a challenge but also is willing to listen to others, take on feedback and work collaboratively to grow as a teacher.

I advise new graduates to learn about the school and community you are interested in working with, take up any opportunity for professional learning and development from others, volunteer your time, and don't be afraid to ask for support!"

## Leigh Morgan

Chairperson and Kaikōtuitui Arataki Oranga  
New Zealand Health Education Association (NZHEA)

## USEFUL WEBSITES

### Education Outdoors New Zealand

[eonz.org.nz](http://eonz.org.nz)

### Physical Education New Zealand

[penz.org.nz](http://penz.org.nz)

### New Zealand Health Education Association (NZHEA)

[healtheducation.org.nz](http://healtheducation.org.nz)

### TeachNZ

[teachnz.govt.nz](http://teachnz.govt.nz)

### NZ Education Gazette

[gazette.education.govt.nz/vacancies](http://gazette.education.govt.nz/vacancies)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the study of Health and PE or the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation please visit our website:

[aut.ac.nz/health-and-physical-education](http://aut.ac.nz/health-and-physical-education)

For other Future Career Sheets visit:

[aut.ac.nz/careersheets](http://aut.ac.nz/careersheets)

### EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS

For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through [elab.aut.ac.nz/](http://elab.aut.ac.nz/)

 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

### FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: [aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://aut.ac.nz/enquire)

[futurestudents@aut.ac.nz](mailto:futurestudents@aut.ac.nz)

 @FutureStudentsofAUT

### CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

[aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://aut.ac.nz/enquire) | [studenthub@aut.ac.nz](mailto:studenthub@aut.ac.nz)

### NORTH CAMPUS

90 Akoranga Drive, Northcote, Auckland

### SOUTH CAMPUS

640 Great South Road, Manukau, Auckland

### AUT MILLENNIUM

17 Antares Place, Mairangi Bay, Auckland

### Connect with us now:



The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, early 2025.

