

## My learning advisor journey

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Kia ora, hi, I hope you're doing well. My name is Cherie, and I grew up in a small town in the Waikato region called Huntly. My dad was a coal-miner, and my mum was kept super-busy raising 13 children! Yeah, I know right, it's a crazy number of kids for two parents to raise. But from my perspective, my childhood was never boring! Now is when I'd ask your name and where you're from, but then you would look a bit comical talking to a page. Writing, as much as we love it, is pretty much a one-sided conversation. But even as a kid, I was mesmerised by the way words (verbal or written) could transform someone. Where a moment of despair could be replaced by awe and inspiration in the span of a heartbeat. I also taught my brother to read – he was 12 and I was 8. So, all things considered, it's not so surprising I ended up here; a learning advisor. You're still reading, right? Okay, cool 😊

Now, if you're reading this, then it's highly likely you're a learning advisor too. And you're probably aware that the occupation of learning advice is rarely acknowledged as a highly skilled profession or for the amazing difference it makes in the lives of students. But over the last 25 years, my perspectives have shifted, not only in how I view my own role, but in how I understand the profound, often invisible impact of this work. I've come to see learning advising as a practice grounded in empathy, pedagogy, and quiet leadership—a role that requires both intellectual agility and emotional intelligence. It is not simply about helping students with writing or study strategies; it's about fostering academic identity, confidence, and agency. We meet students at critical junctures, listen deeply, and support them to find clarity, direction, and sometimes even hope. This work may not always be publicly celebrated, but it is essential.

Over the years, my mahi as a learning advisor has been both a privilege and a continual learning journey. In this role, I have supported students from diverse backgrounds and from across all stages of academic development; from building foundational skills and navigating complex assessments, to striving for excellence in research and writing. Working one-on-one with students and facilitating learning in large classroom settings has also allowed me to witness a remarkable range of academic transformation and resilience.

These experiences have deepened my understanding of the diverse challenges students face, particularly in the way they adjust to academic expectations and grow in confidence to fully participate in scholarly discourse. Moreover, I enjoy demystifying academic conventions and empowering students to articulate their ideas with clarity and conviction. Of which, I am continually inspired by the tenacity and insight of the students we support, and I carry with me a deep respect for their aspirations and learning journeys. Whether online or in-person, the human connection that underpins this work has always been at the heart of its impact!

My approach has evolved with changing educational technologies, institutional priorities, and student demographics. Through this, I have remained committed to inclusive and student-centred practices that acknowledge the varied lived experiences learners bring into academic spaces. I have also grown professionally, refining my communication skills, expanding my knowledge of pedagogical theory, and building collaborative relationships across the tertiary landscape.

I am thankful for the colleagues that I share this profession with – Never have I ever worked with so many like-minded people, who are not only consummate professionals but also tend to have an endless supply of empathy and support! Hence, the years spent working in this profession have affirmed my belief in the transformative power of education. This role has not only shaped the way I teach and guide others, but also the way I listen, reflect, and continue to learn.

So that's a bit about me and my journey. I wonder... what is your story? I'm here if you ever want to share it 😊