

In memoriam: Associate Professor Emerita Dr Susan Carter

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In remembrance and celebration of Susan Carter, please read the following three memorials from some of the many ATLAANZ members for whom Susan was important, influential, and dear: Dr Deborah Laurs, Dr Josta Heyligers, and Professor Emmanuel Manalo.

In memoriam: Associate Professor Emerita Dr Susan Carter (10.07.47 – 24.05.25)

Deborah Laurs

Susan first became a learning advisor at the University of Auckland's Student Learning Centre (SLC) in 2004, where she developed and coordinated the doctoral learning programme until the centre's disestablishment in 2012. Thereafter, she joined CLeAR (the Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education), leading academic development workshops and supervising doctoral candidates until her retirement in 2020, whereupon she remained an honorary member of the Faculty of Education.

Susan's enthusiasm for learning and learners was boundless. A lifelong learner herself, she built networks with colleagues in Australia, South Africa, USA, Great Britain and Scandinavia, most recently gaining funding to support women researchers from the Global South to publish their work. Her own output was prolific in the fields of both Medieval Studies and student success, with a particular focus on the genre of thesis writing, and she helped establish one of the first online blog communities, [doctoral writing SIG](#), whose legacy lives on.

Together we had fun delivering writing workshops for students and supervisors at both Auckland and Victoria universities; we also co-presented at ATLAANZ, HERDSA and [Quality in Postgraduate Research](#) conferences, and collaborated on major publications for Routledge: *Developing Generic Support for Doctoral Students: Practice and Pedagogy* and *Developing Research Writing: A Handbook for Supervisors and Advisors*, bringing together a wide range of international contributors, all of whom Susan had personally recruited. Susan was still actively engaged in scholarship until her death in May 2025, overseeing our co-authored chapter (bringing together friends and colleagues from the universities of Auckland, Western Sydney and South Australia), for *Shaping Doctoral Experiences: Nurturing the Relational*, which was published by Bloomsbury in February 2026.

Although academic duties and doctoral supervision became her focus in later years, Susan remained a passionate advocate for the learning advising profession, honouring our community's values of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and 'va (relational space) throughout her career. Moreover, she was *real*, a true friend and mentor whose wicked sense of humour and zest for life I will always treasure. Moe mai rā, e hoa.

Assoc Prof (Emerita) Susan Carter:

the heroine and trickster of learning advice and doctoral support

Josta Heyligers

By the time you read this, it has been more than a year that Susan said goodbye and danced her way to an invisible realm, envisaging her as a medieval angel (medieval literature

being her own PhD topic) with large wings and light feet (she loved to dance and her Zumba moves were very much her own).



Figure 1. Kaitiaki Mātauranga [Generated using Microsoft Copilot, May, 2026]

To me, she was special: a dear colleague in the Student Learning Centre days at the University of Auckland (2000-2012), hearing her laugh and typing away in her small office she shared with our then guru on PG support, Dr Barry White.

Susan, however, was so much more than a colleague. She was a dear friend, who read chapters of my thesis (2005) and gave constructive, sometimes harsh, critical comments. But she knew I could take it as I either agreed or made my points of disagreement. She gave you hugs; prepared dinners and opened her house to the group of learning advisers and allied staff who were dear to her, and so she was to us. Our last dinner as this close-knit group was only a few months before she departed and we had to say goodbye. With her passing, a sense of lightness was lost.

My last meeting alone with Susan was in Whanganui where she had family and I a house. It was around Christmas, the end of 2023, and we met near the information centre, walking along our much-loved river under a bright blue sky to the Dublin bridge and back again to the city via Kowhai park. It was a special day as we shared life's not so good and good moments, were quite reflective, not knowing the sad events that were to come as I'u, a dear AUT colleague, and my

own dearest departed from this world within three months of each other, and I had a critical diagnosis myself.

Why is Susan so dear to me? Apart from the above, I admired her strength, her being both the heroine and trickster of learning advice and doctoral education. Heroine... she was a trailblazer, truly admired for her achievements in research on doctoral issues, in particular supervision and thesis (writing) support, and she had qualities to be able to connect and make a major impact on the life of her friends, colleagues and students she supervised and who often became friends. Trickster... Susan was known for her 'wicked' sense of humour and esoteric titles, especially when she was the sole author of an article, or wrote with a likeminded colleague, for example:

The Methodology of Magpies; Academia as Unhomely Habitus?; A Fruitcake Imaginary?; Air and light and time and space: How successful academics write; Inspiring desire: A new materialist bent to doctoral education in Arts and Humanities; From Eden to Agora: The E-Learning Trading Zone

It reflected Susan's love for literature and the postmodern, or is it post structural, discourse: deconstructing to open up spaces for 'new thinking and being' in preferably creative ways.

She definitely was not middle of the road, didn't fit boxes. There was only one Susan, and she had a deep, motherly love for her family and anyone in her orbit, personifying whakawhanaungatanga. Susan was and remains special as for many she touched, she may have departed but forever lives in our hearts. It was an honour and pleasure to have known Susan. Kua whetūrangitia koe, and as such on a clear night sky I look for a dancing star, and reminisce her to be there forever: Ko te tini whetū i te rangi, mau tonu, mau tonu.

A tribute to Susan Carter, a dear friend and former colleague

Emmanuel Manalo

I still remember when I first met Susan Carter when she came to interview for the position of Doctoral Program Coordinator at the Student Learning Centre (SLC) at the

University of Auckland. She came across as authentically unusual in her responses and ideas. I remember at the end of the interview feeling uncertain about some of her ideas, but absolutely certain that she would never be an ordinary appointment.

Susan, by her own account, lived her life without being tied down by society's expectations, and this was largely how she worked. She valued her original thinking above all else, and she was not afraid to speak or to make decisions that did not always align with what others expected. But she was also genuinely kind and deeply empathetic, caring for those around her – including the doctoral and postgraduate students she taught and supported – in ways that I can only describe as admirable and inspiring.

I have always felt glad that, despite some uncertainty during that interview, we decided to employ her, because in a very short period of time she turned that doctoral programme into a real ground-breaking success. Susan was like that: given enough slack (or sometimes, even in constrained situations), she reliably and impressively got done whatever she set out to do. Even though she was often unconventional, the academic community in which she chose to find her unique niche increasingly came to recognise the excellence of her achievements, and she rose all the way to the rank of Associate Professor – something that remains unusual for colleagues working in learning advisor positions.

Over the years, Susan and her husband, Neale, regularly hosted SLC get-togethers at their amazing house in Parnell. They were always enjoyable occasions with close and trusted friends, full of reminiscences and laughter about all sorts of things that had happened.



Figure 2. Get-together at Susan and Neale's in February 2024, from left: Emmanuel, Glenis Wong-Toi, Jenny Marshall, Jackie Ede, Susan, Josta Heyligers, Lynette Herrero, Rachel Dryer, and Neale

Susan, while writing this, I realise it has already been over a year since you left us. We miss you, and we will continue to remember you and talk fondly of you – as we are doing now and in the years to come. Your innovations in doctoral programme provision, your many published works, the students you supported, and the friends you gathered around you remain part of the legacy you leave behind.