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NEW ZEALAND'S INTELLIGENCE PROFESSIONALS: PEOPLE WITHOUT A PROFESSION

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International literature reports a significant growth in educational offerings in intelligence studies globally as well as moves toward the professionalisation of intelligence practice over the last two decades. Such developments have been significantly more subdued in New Zealand where higher education and training are much less coordinated, facing ongoing fiscal challenges and with moves to professionalise the intelligence sector having stalled. This study draws on intelligence sector respondents and gives voice to a range of concerns expressed by them as to their place as intelligence professionals across a spectrum of law enforcement and regulatory agencies in New Zealand. As pessimistic as this article is about the current state of New Zealand's intelligence practice, it exposes clearly where improvements could be made and uncovers a noted practitioner desire to bridge the gap between themselves and academics.

Keywords: Intelligence, Education, Training, Transparency, Professionalisation, Five Eyes.

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Introduction

Our research project sets out to examine New Zealand's intelligence professionals and the role which postgraduate education in intelligence studies plays within that field. The postgraduate level was decided on because we assumed most intelligence practitioners were recruited from degree-qualified pools of individuals, and a significant portion of our students' study with us part-time while working in their intelligence roles. Therefore, the design and delivery of our courses is aimed at the professional development of existing intelligence practitioners. This study matters to us because it seeks to evaluate if we as educators are delivering in the 21st century what we need to.

New Zealand is largely absent from international literature on intelligence education, so this study casts light on the New Zealand experience and examines it closely to reveal what its own practitioners make of their educational and professional development. It is not uncommon that international studies of Five Eyes do not place much emphasis on New Zealand's role in that arrangement, assuming perhaps because we are small, we are irrelevant.¹ This study asserts our relevance albeit in the educational space. Many of the basic techniques of analytical tradecraft are common across Five Eyes and beyond, and therefore New Zealand's experience is worthy of consideration, not neglect. Furthermore, our positioning of this paper in *National Security Journal* is deliberate. It enables us to speak directly to our intelligence and organisational audiences and their executive masters as well as to intelligence academics, in New Zealand and elsewhere, who are concerned with the future of intelligence studies and education.

We are extremely grateful to those participants who offered their time, expertise, and reflections to make this study possible. As a result of their cooperation and engagement we were able to find that international growth in educational offerings in intelligence studies² as well as moves toward the professionalisation of intelligence practice, have been much more subdued in New Zealand than is apparent elsewhere.³ We also found that, while education in intelligence studies is practical and valued here, participants recognise that its full potential is stymied by ever-present fiscal challenges, varying understandings of educational value among intelligence managers, as well as a lack of intelligence-literacy at New Zealand's organisational senior management and executive levels. It is also clear from this study that the lack of a centralised or coordinated structure to training, education and qualification, compounded by on-going economic constraints, means intelligence professionalisation in New Zealand is currently regressing rather than progressing. The educational requirements of intelligence professionals are recognised by our respondents as likely to be significantly improved by a better integration, cooperation and understanding between practitioners and academics. Indeed, they exhibit a strong desire for this. But agency culture, New Zealand's historic lack of intelligence transparency and shrinking academy are currently militating against any improvement in the relationship between scholars and practitioners. In a world with

increasing uncertainty, geopolitical risk and transnational criminal activity, in which intelligence capability is more necessary than it ever has been, we assess New Zealand's intelligence capability is under-valued, under-trained and under-educated.

Methodology

Between mid-April and the end of June 2026 intelligence practitioners were sought for a study on the role of postgraduate education among New Zealand's intelligence professionals and the organisations they worked for. Following approval from Massey University's Ethics Committee, an advertisement was run calling for study participants through the New Zealand Institute of Intelligence Professionals (NZIIP). NZIIP is estimated to have a membership of about 300-450, drawn from a pool of possibly 1,600-2,000 intelligence professionals across the country.⁴ A total of 56 intelligence professionals initially expressed interest in this study and were sent the requisite information sheet, consent form and questionnaire. Thirty-three eventually completed and returned consent forms and questionnaires.

To ensure anonymity from the outset all initial responses were numbered (Participant #1 to Participant #56) and these original numbers were retained and used for those who completed questionnaires. The responses were then tabulated under each question and analysed for themes which emerged. These themes are discussed here as much as possible using the words the participants gave us to capture and convey their voice, but we have also added ours, to further compare, contrast and critique their responses in a search for meaning from the voices being considered together.

The study did not undertake to elicit information on specific agencies, although it was obvious from the responses that we had obtained a broad representative cross section from multiple law enforcement and regulatory agencies, and from some private sector practitioners. There were also a number from military or with previous military backgrounds, a few with prior security intelligence experience and some with intelligence experience and training outside of New Zealand. The vast majority of our respondents do not work for intelligence organisations, but rather for agencies which have established intelligence workgroups to aid those agencies' broader functions. In a break with 20th century experience, most of New Zealand's intelligence practitioners now operate outside the traditional security-focused "intelligence community."

A professional 'work force' without a profession

It is clear from this study that New Zealand's intelligence practitioners exist across law enforcement and regulatory agencies in New Zealand and are routinely involved in actual intelligence or intelligence-adjacent pursuits. Among our participants are people with undergraduate degrees, and postgraduate qualifications (including PhDs) in

a wide array of disciplines, with only a small number without them. One participant noted however, “I am surrounded by intelligence practitioners who do not have degrees but who are very smart and adept practitioners.”⁵ Another that “[o]ne of the best intel analysts I have seen doesn’t have any formal qual[ification]s and now teaches it.”⁶ Other respondents referred to non-academic entry paths which were just as valued (and by some, more so).⁷ The call for participants for this study likely attracted people with tertiary qualifications, and the high levels of education among our respondents likely does not reflect general educational levels among New Zealand’s intelligence workforce as a whole.

Respondents readily perceived their professional identity as ‘intelligence’ and themselves as ‘professionals’. But the responses were less than convincing that these professionals were actually part of ‘a profession’. Respondents used a range of adjectives to describe themselves – a network⁸, a collective⁹, a community of practice¹⁰, a cohort¹¹, a pool¹², a body,¹³ a system,¹⁴ an industry¹⁵ and ‘a group of individuals.’¹⁶

More revealing were the explanations given for the descriptors. One practitioner described the New Zealand intelligence workforce as “multi-faceted....probably not united” and a function which a number of agencies had ‘cobbled’ together. The single uniting feature was described as “shared job titles”.¹⁷ Another noted that it was “best understood as a broader intelligence community or community of practice, rather than a single, clearly defined profession.”¹⁸ Two practitioners referred to a distinct lack of maturity; the first that New Zealand’s intelligence practitioners compared unfavourably to other Five Eyes countries in lacking a formal centralised body,¹⁹ and the second that New Zealand’s intelligence profession was “in its infancy still after 40 years plus” due to fluctuating bureaucratic support at senior levels, impacted heavily by funding constraints and as always size matters:

...the numbers have not reached the critical mass to be persuasive enough across government to lift the profession from a nice to have, to must have, and has been stonewalled in its development as a profession over the last 20 years.²⁰

‘We have a training problem’

A number of respondents noted that formally recognised intelligence training had reduced in recent years and, in fact, there were “serious issues with intelligence training in the industry as a whole.”²¹ A previous multi-agency grouping – the Combined Law Agency Group (CLAG) – was established in 1999 to improve information sharing between security, law enforcement and regulatory agencies.²² Over time an agreed training regime was established within the CLAG framework. The New Zealand Diploma of Intelligence Analysis (NZDIA) – accredited under the New Zealand Qualifications Authority – was adopted as a standardised requirement under CLAG and was delivered

by the Royal New Zealand Police College (RNZPC) to CLAG members. Over time this qualification became increasingly problematic.²³ Non-police agencies struggled to get sufficient places on training courses, and the COVID period compounded problems already surfacing with RNZPC unable to meet NZ Police demand for NZDIA delivery. CLAG was disestablished -or rather it disintegrated - around 2020/21 and with it, the cooperation in training among its member agencies ceased.²⁴ NZ Police abandoned the NZDIA in 2024 in favour of its new police-specific programme, and other agencies now also meet their own training requirements (or, in some cases, appear to do little, if any, formal training). The NZDIA is still taught by some private providers, but only five of our respondents reported holding it.²⁵

What is clear is that civilian intelligence training, including in the traditional security intelligence agencies, is vastly less than what military intelligence practitioners undertake.²⁶ Drawing from those respondents familiar with both domains, it appears New Zealand's civilian intelligence practitioners are by a large measure - under-trained.²⁷ This is no trivial matter:

In short, we have a training problem. We don't invest in it. We don't value it. This leads to mistakes, it introduces risk. It is astounding. I consider it to be somewhat of a dirty little secret of the wider [New Zealand] intelligence community.²⁸

Most respondents possessed the intelligence qualifications offered by Massey University's Centre for Defence and Security Studies, these being the only tertiary intelligence-specific qualifications offered in New Zealand. A few respondents had intelligence qualifications from overseas universities. But in 2026 there is clearly no standardised qualification among New Zealand's intelligence practitioners. One respondent noted that "[H]aving an intel qualification available, which is supported and used by most NZ Govt agencies, would help: define us as a profession..." supporting the notion that full professionalisation in New Zealand had yet to be accomplished. To a subsequent question, the same respondent noted: "P[ro]f[essional] ask me all the time... what do you need to get into [...] intel. Well...nothing concrete is the answer. Try your luck. (That's not what I say, but it is the truth.)"²⁹

While intelligence practitioners see themselves as professionals with a wide but definable scope of endeavour they possess no form of centralised registration in which to validate their activities or the skills required to carry them out. The existence of NZIIP demonstrates an aspiration in this respect, and the prior existence of CLAG points to progress towards professionalisation in the past. But that progress stalled with CLAGs disintegration and there is currently no central or consistent validation for a New Zealand intelligence profession or the skill sets applied in it. While security clearances are obviously required for some parts of the intelligence workforce, this is not the case for all of it, and the security clearance rules inhibit anyone from disclosing that this is held.

The secret nature of some parts of the workforce suggests there may be two types of civilian intelligence professional in New Zealand; the security intelligence professional, and the other agency or private sector professionals, which further complicates a formal recognition of intelligence as a singular profession in New Zealand. A respondent with decades of experience in several intelligence contexts can have the last word on this topic:

NZINC would benefit enormously from having a 'School of Intelligence'. With the demise of CLAG training ... there's a huge gap in the market. No single government agency has the capacity to offer this capability, so to maintain the integrity of the Intelligence practice, a centralised educational resource needs to be out-sourced.³⁰

The Value of Education

How educational achievement was viewed varied remarkably among the cohort. Twenty-five out of the 32 respondents considered that a postgraduate qualification in intelligence studies was important. The tenor of responses covered a wide range of benefits from critical thinking, research skills, communication, a broadening and deepening of understanding of the intelligence world, problem solving, understanding structured analytic techniques, analytical rigour and networking. "It teaches you to think critically, analyse material, write, collate, assess, triage, THINK in a way that on-the-job mentoring/training simply cannot."³¹ Intelligence practitioners were generally critical of theoretical or 'overly academic' approaches to knowledge, although a small number discussed the need for the connection between theory and practice to be examined. One respondent stood out:

A good postgraduate program forces you to engage with the epistemology of intelligence: [the] why and value of intelligence more so than the how. Much intelligence work is often learnt on the job by osmosis, which builds competence but also bakes in local habits and blind spots. Post-grad study gives a practitioner the vocabulary and theory to interrogate their own tradecraft, defend an assessment under challenge, and contribute to standards rather than just apply them.³²

Most respondents also considered their intelligence education to be insightful, rewarding and generally useful. Their qualifications were considered important in getting them into their roles and a number noted the ability to think freely as university students, which was not always the case in their workplaces.³³ Most thought historical topics and open-source case studies were relevant to developing skillsets applicable in a contemporary environment.

The bulk of respondents considered experience and education to be roughly equal in importance, although they recognised that experience trumped qualifications for appointments or promotion. However, there was a noticeable difference in the way analysts viewed their own qualifications from how those in supervisory or management roles viewed them. Of the latter, one criticised people who were “book smart” but unable to “rise to intelligence challenges” who displayed an “over-reliance on intellectualism and little/less resort to bare intellect.”³⁴ Another claimed there was “already a problem with many applicants being **overqualified and under skilled** [emphasis in the original]” and that despite qualifications, intelligence jobs had an entry level that everyone started at – usually intelligence support officer, or something akin to a trainee or junior-analyst.³⁵ Education was recognised as providing some key foundational skills, but it could not supply work ready analysts. Most intelligence managers “will take a battle hardened intel analyst over someone with some qual[ification]s to their name any day (myself included).”³⁶ A clear anti-intellectual bias was revealed by a number of participants. One noted:

Practical experience is seen as having greater value. Even if you have been hopeless in a role, the fact that you have been in that role would be perceived to have greater value than academic learning. Sometimes they don't like people who are too academic.³⁷

Another that:

I've spoken to someone who had worked in academia for years and wanted to come into intel, and I knew it would be hard for them to break through – despite their age and experience in that space. And that's mostly because of lack of understanding/reputation on the side of hiring managers, but also probably the assumed inability of the academic to understand the real world.³⁸

A third described a deeply embedded prejudice:

While some individuals praise the efforts and recognise the value afforded by these qualifications, I have experienced other individuals downplaying or dismissing the value of academia (making dismissive underhanded comments) and possibly, harboring a disregard and underlying negative attitude toward scholars. However, this is a deeply culturally and systematic issue in New Zealand that needs to be addressed generally, and is not just isolated to our organisation or sector.³⁹

Roughly half of the respondents considered that their educational qualifications were respected by their colleagues, the remainder did not think so or had mixed views. It appears qualifications are not displayed anywhere, a number mentioned that only a few of their colleagues knew they possessed them and were not a topic that was generally discussed.

When asked about managerial and organisational appreciation of academic qualifications, responses were much less clear. Positive responses halved, and many answers were caveated. Fiscal constraints were frequently mentioned as a barrier to professional or tertiary educational development.⁴⁰ Several participants noted far deeper cultural and organisational barriers to the workplace effectiveness of educationally acquired skillsets. Some organisations simply lacked interest altogether in educational development: “I don’t think academic education is particularly highly valued in my organisation and we don’t have the mechanisms to develop people that do have that type of education.”⁴¹

Managers who lacked the qualifications their analysts possessed, did not appreciate the potential value of education to intelligence work: “It would be ideal if they also undertook further education or [were] shown the course material to help them understand what their staff are doing. They might then have a greater appreciation for the benefits it brings.”⁴² As another explained: “If your manager doesn’t understand your academic experience... then they won’t understand or necessarily see the value of applying it to the work.”⁴³ Another participant refined the problem to a lack of understanding across all levels “as to how to transfer newly acquired skills into the workplace” although they suspected this was due to “management dismissing further education as a ‘nice to have’ and now their staff member is back in the workplace they can carry on with how things were.”⁴⁴

A further barrier identified was standardisation of intelligence outputs where organisations “...heavily template intelligence products in order to create consistency and manage risk. This discourages deeper analytical thinking and limits the practical application of concepts and methodologies taught in higher education.”⁴⁵ The “high demands and busy nature” of intelligence work also made it “challenging to apply academic skills to the day-to-day realities of the job.”⁴⁶ This was further aggravated by a culture of silos:

[there is] a lack of willingness to listen to diverse thought, people surround themselves with like minded people, there is a lack of willingness to engage with anyone outside of the organization. We tend to talk to in-house ‘experts’ rather than others in other agencies, community or NGOs to get a different perspective.⁴⁷

‘Intelligence is a System’

A fundamental concern was that those who understood the role of intelligence were the practitioners themselves, but this level of understanding diminished beyond their own workgroups. This was not unanimous among participants – some did report a growing organisational appreciation of intelligence benefit. “The discipline of intelligence across government is certainly making headway, with some agencies now standing up intelligence capability and valuing its contribution to their work. My agency certainly values intelligence contribution...”⁴⁸

Others were less confident however, and there was a clear theme among a number of respondents that intelligence was being delivered to a bureaucratic customer base with “a natural aversion to anything academic” and of organisations – which existed for other reasons - that did not value the intelligence role.⁴⁹ In the view of one practitioner this led to overcompensation:

I am very concerned many of our intelligence staff present themselves and what they do as somehow superior, or more clever, than the people we are supposed to be supporting. In part this is staff desperately trying to display their worth in an organization that does not value what they do.⁵⁰

Another observed that while “intelligence practitioners can fully understand what intelligence is, the rest of the organisation may not.”⁵¹ “The sad fact is overwhelmingly those whose role it is to use intelligence have very limited ability to understand it, direct it, let alone use it.”⁵² This practitioner continued, capturing the essence of the problem as he saw it:

Intelligence is a system. Yes, it requires people who can produce intelligence, but so does it require people who are able to use it. Intelligence managers act as a bridge between the two roles. They both translate what users of intelligence need and ensure those who are producing intelligence are delivering to that need.

If we focus exclusively on training/teaching those who expect to produce intelligence to the exclusion of those who need to know how to use it, then the benefits gained from a postgraduate education in intelligence are likely to be wasted.

Overwhelmingly, only the more limited, unsophisticated end of intelligence is valued. Those who produce it do not need (and probably don’t want) postgraduate qualifications to do it.⁵³

Academic-Practitioner Nexus

As rewarding as participants generally found their academic endeavours, when it came to intelligence educators, there was a consensus that academics had to be credible. For almost half the cohort, this meant having actual experience in a practical intelligence setting and some asserted expectations that academics should be teaching their students how to write intelligence reports and give intelligence briefings.⁵⁴ There was a motif of the importance of story-telling, 'war stories' and 'lived' experiences.⁵⁵ Others were less insistent on actual experience but still thought a clear understanding, or connection with intelligence practitioners was essential and that academic knowledge had to be relatable to the practical intelligence environment.⁵⁶ There was no conception that someone could be a successful practitioner and a successful academic *at the same time*.⁵⁷

A few answered the question differently, emphasising instead genuine teaching skills, a desire to challenge and ability to deliver effectively.⁵⁸ One saw a more independent role for an intelligence academic as "Someone who questions (with their academic freedom) the way the state/state agencies are operating and the value they are adding and encourages rigour and critical thinking from those within...."⁵⁹ Against the overall tenor of responses, there were a few who mentioned the need for theory, and its relationship to the world and an occasional desire for the broader intelligence environment to be explained. These were a minority among respondents however, most did not mention theory, or if they did, referred to it as an encumbrance not relevant to the 'real world'.

Particularly noticeable was the frequency with which the term 'real world' or 'contemporary' or 'practical' world appeared in responses. There was a clear underlying assumption that academics did not inhabit the 'real world' or at least not in the way that practitioners did. "The 'real' world comprised contemporary conditions and changes, 'time pressure, uncertainty, agency constraints, and limited information.'"⁶⁰ There was a disconnect asserted between "educational environment and the painful realities of intelligence work." The 'pain' comprised "tempo, incomplete information, relationship management, organizational (and increasingly political) pressures, and tighter deadlines."⁶¹ The pace at which events unfolded often left no time to think about broader context. Real time intelligence work was about the trees, not the forest. Things also happened "behind the headlines", out of the public eye and contemporary issues were subject to classification creating a clear academic gap in knowledge. Academics were thought not necessarily up to date with advances in practice, including new technological tools useful in intelligence collection and analysis. One respondent considered academics to be prone to 'fake knowledge', of existing in a 'bubble' and out of touch with reality.⁶²

Practitioners however displayed little understanding of the academic work environment or the statutory purpose of academics under New Zealand's Education Act to be society's critic and conscience.⁶³ That academics had a role to research, inform and teach 'about' intelligence was recognised by some respondents; but still there was a clear assumption academics existed (or should exist) primarily to serve agency requirements. Respondents also seemed to assume that academics were less busy, had more time, were free of deadlines, and did not work at pace. There was no awareness of the frustrations caused by the classification system which practitioners use, and routinely over-use, which prevents academic and public access to contemporary and historic intelligence data (discussed further below).

To build a better academic-practitioner nexus only one respondent mentioned the Official Information Act, noting it was inadequate and they advanced the need for greater transparency.⁶⁴ They then led onto an idea which coincided with most other respondents of encouraging greater collaboration between practitioners and academics.⁶⁵ This was suggested to be practitioner placement in academic settings, or academic placement within agencies. Alternatively, specifically selected topics could be worked on jointly. More general interaction such as 'classified scholarship', conferences, workshops, collaborative forums, networking, guest presentations, shadowing, practitioner's advising on course content, table-top exercises and doing more to promote the *National Security Journal* were all advanced. "Academics and professionals should simply realise that they are two sides of the same coin that can learn from each other and help each other improve."⁶⁶

While collaborative approaches were clearly favoured by almost all respondents, there was an underlying theme that it was academics who needed to do the catching-up. Academics should make efforts to keep up to date 'from an operational perspective' observed one;⁶⁷ another that for "strategic intelligence, any educational learning needs to fit into the approach we take to that intelligence practice."⁶⁸ A further preference was expressed for "more universities collaborating with government departments to deliver shorter smaller courses" and for these to lead to a qualification.⁶⁹

Academic courses will teach what is deemed necessary to maintain a standard of academic legitimacy, but intelligence practitioners will only value and take what they consider to be of most practical use to their work. The rest is best left in the classroom and books.⁷⁰

A review of responses

This study has revealed a significant intelligence work force existing across multiple civilian law enforcement and regulatory agencies in New Zealand. Among its ranks are some superbly trained and highly educated and/or experienced practitioners, but training and education levels are nonetheless variable. As a collective, the intelligence workforce lacks an integrated training and education framework which aligns and connects the various skill sets and experience it requires to function. It has pockets of excellence but as a 'profession' tailored to its particular intelligence, law enforcement, regulatory and security environments it is significantly under-trained, fragmented, and undervalued.

This problem is complicated by organisational silos. Despite the existence of inter-agency secondments and intelligence fusion hubs in certain areas, the absence of a co-ordinated training framework combined with organisational disinterest in engaging with academics has resulted in what has been observed as 'a dirty little secret' of New Zealand's intelligence practice – a frank and irresponsible neglect to build, train and educate a national intelligence profession. The vast bulk of New Zealand's intelligence professionals would not know who Sherman Kent was, nor know much about the deep and purposeful academic origins of the intelligence analysis practices they have inherited.⁷¹ Yet in so much of what they do, they are Kent's vocational descendants and their vocational whakapapa is important to who, and what, they are.

Among our participants is a broad and genuine interest in postgraduate qualifications in intelligence studies, with a range of acquired skills recognised as necessary and applicable to a practical intelligence environment. However, the appreciation of academic value was perceived to erode further up the management hierarchy. Those managers, who in their earlier careers had engaged in intelligence studies were generally highly supportive of their staff taking up educational opportunities, but they were an exception. Little if any organisational thought appears to have been applied to harnessing and transferring academic skillsets to intelligence practice and there was an undercurrent of suspicion that organisational culture actively suppressed free ranging and diverse thought. There was a favouring of experience over qualifications at all levels which tended, at its extreme, toward an anti-intellectual bias. As participants began to talk about their wider organisations, some did feel valued and supported, but the remainder ranged from ambivalent to expressing clear criticism of the intelligence illiteracy of senior level and executive management. We conclude that as New Zealand's intelligence professionals are struggling for a wider appreciation of their value within their own bureaucratic system, the role of academics and the value of targeted higher educational qualifications in intelligence studies is experiencing a similar challenge among those who do the hiring.

Our respondents offered several suggestions to bridge the academic-practitioner divide. In other Five Eyes countries there is a much stronger interaction between academics and practitioners, a circumstance our respondents would be keen to see emulated in New Zealand. However, New Zealand's official agencies have shown little desire to open opportunities to involve intelligence academics in their 'real world,' which is further complicated by the limited number of intelligence academics in the country. Civil service roles as well as academic positions have been vulnerable to government cost cutting in recent years,⁷² and more roles are flagged to disappear under government reduction targets announced in May 2026.⁷³ The number of genuine New Zealand intelligence and security studies academics has been significantly reduced over the last five years, handicapping their ability to deliver training and educational solutions.

National security or security and intelligence relevant conferences, round tables and workshops have been held by Massey, Otago and Victoria universities in recent years, and the *National Security Journal* has been running since 2019 as a deliberate attempt to bridge gaps between academics and practitioners. Such moves toward cooperation are almost exclusively academically driven and while agencies participate (and have in the past provided a critical degree of funding), little further engagement from them follows these events. There was a noticeable increase in agency-academic cooperation in the wake of the 2019 Mosque attacks, as agencies sensed their vulnerabilities to external criticism. But the period of apparent openness and outreach has now passed, and bureaucratic self-confidence (arguably over-confidence) has reestablished itself resulting in little bureaucratic interest in opening doors to intelligence academics.

New Zealand's Five Eyes partners have far more conducive environments for intelligence scholarship; the US, UK and Australia all have accessible historical intelligence records. New Zealand's historical security intelligence record by contrast remains almost completely un-archived, with access to it controlled by the Official Information Act regime. There is a well-embedded agency-wide culture of maximising the exemptions available under the OIA. This means information (if it is released) is often delayed, redacted and selected by the agency applying strictly literal and often organisationally convenient interpretations of any given request. Publicity in September 2026 of a Ministry of Education official deliberately seeking to prevent records being kept to avoid disclosure, we suspect, is not an exception, but a practice across the public service.⁷⁴ It is no surprise Richard Kerbaj in his 2022 book on Five Eyes observed New Zealand as being the most difficult to obtain information about.⁷⁵ In other work we have been critical of New Zealand's government agencies' persistent use of the OIA's exemptions to prevent disclosure of information, and their imposition over documentary records going back decades.⁷⁶ The several shortcomings of academics, so well described here by our respondents, as well as the articulation of a 'real world' detached from academic experience, are to a significant degree of their agencies' own making.

To close we observe the current state of New Zealand's intelligence practice to be a workforce made up of professionals – but not a profession. The collective value of this workforce is yet to be entirely appreciated by its employers. It is also a workforce that has yet to understand itself; its desire to professionalise originated years ago, but it has stalled amid an inability to work together and maintain a functional and consistent training, education and qualification framework. Consequently, this workforce lacks a collective understanding of its shared practices and there is no broad basis to demonstrate the quality assurance of its outputs. Ultimately this workforce has been unable to positively shape its identity as a profession. While we deeply thank our participants once again, and very much appreciate their candid observations which have made this paper possible – we set down a challenge to you all – you have helped us define the problem, could we now start a conversation about how to fix it?

In the meantime, our research will go on. Having captured and conveyed the New Zealand experience of intelligence education, our next steps are to place it among an international milieu. In doing so we seek to establish if New Zealand is an exception, trapped permanently by its size, lack of resources and its position at the farthest end of the globe. Or we may find our Five Eyes partners, or other countries we compare ourselves to, experiencing similar problems. Could they help us to resolve these problems? Could we help them? Perhaps New Zealand is not so irrelevant after all.

1 See John Battersby & Rhys Ball, The Phantom Eye: New Zealand and the Five Eyes, *Intelligence and National Security*, 38:6 (2023), p.920; <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2023.2212557>

2 Michael and Kornbluth note the approach to the study of intelligence mirrors each country's corresponding intelligence tradition, secrecy and ethos of government. In New Zealand the tradition is to reveal almost nothing, and what academic offerings exist reflect the decisions of those involved in teaching them. See Kobi Michael & Aaron Kornbluth, The Academization of Intelligence: A Comparative Overview of Intelligence Studies in the West, *Cyber, Intelligence, and Security*, 3:1 (2019), p.124. see also Ruben Arcos, Nicole K Drumhillier and Mark Phythian, 'Navigating the Academic-Practitioner Divide in Intelligence Studies,' in *The academic-practitioner divide in intelligence studies*, eds. Arcus, Drumhillier & Phythian (Bloomsbury, 2024), pp. (ebook p.13/40)

3 See Martin Rudner, "Intelligence Studies in Higher Education: Capacity-Building to Meet Societal Demand," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 22 (2009), pp.110-130; & Matthew D. Crosston, "Fragile Friendships: Partnerships Between the Academy and intelligence," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 31:1 (2018), pp.139-158.

4 An estimate of 300 NZIIP members and 2000 intelligence practitioners nationwide was provided, Personal communication, former NZIIP Chair to J Battersby, 24 June 2026; a stated membership of 450 funded membership places although it was likely less than that and on the number intelligence professionals "I wouldn't hazard a guess on that one." NZIIP Chair to J Battersby, 6 July 2026: finally, an estimate of 1,600 was provided by Respondent #20 to J Battersby, personal communication, 7 July 2026.

5 Participants #19 #47

6 Participants #19 #34

7 Participant #19 #41

8 Participant #1

9 Participants #13, #14, #19

- 10 Participant #19
- 11 Participant #14
- 12 Participant #43
- 13 Participant #36
- 14 Participant #16
- 15 Participant #56
- 16 Participant #39
- 17 Participant #3 “...trying to cobble together an intelligence department.”
- 18 Participant #19
- 19 Participant #40
- 20 Participant #46
- 21 Participant #56
- 22 “Determining Intelligence Needs and Co-ordinating Information Flows,” Audit Office, 2003, 4.36-4.38; <https://ao.parliament.nz/2003/domestic-security/part4.htm>
- 23 The lead author was increasingly involved in police intelligence training as budget constraints and the COVID19 restrictions severely impacted RNZPC delivery of the NZDIA in early 2020s, which coincided with shortcomings identified in the NZDIA programme.
- 24 Participant #20, personal communication with the author, 7 July 2026.
- 25 Participants #19, #33, #35, #39 and #54.
- 26 Personal communication, former NZIIP Chair to J Battersby, 22 July 2026.
- 27 Participant #11, personal communication with the author 22 July 2026; Participant #4, Personal communication, 22 July 2026.
- 28 Personal communication, former NZIIP Chair to J Battersby, 22 July 2026.
- 29 Participant #3. This respondent identified their agency, which has been removed to comply with ethical approval.
- 30 Participant #20
- 31 Participant #3
- 32 Participant #36
- 33 Participant #41
- 34 Participant #47
- 35 Participant #56
- 36 Participant #56
- 37 Participant #5
- 38 Participant #3
- 39 Participant #6
- 40 Participant #11
- 41 Participant #10
- 42 Participant #14
- 43 Participant #45
- 44 Participant #14
- 45 Participant #41
- 46 Participant #19 (& also Participant #54)
- 47 Participant #5
- 48 Participant #47
- 49 Participant #16
- 50 Participant #16
- 51 Participant #33
- 52 Participant #16 #35 #41

53 Participant #16

54 Participants #1, #2, #3, #18, #28, #31, #35, #40, #43, #45 & #56. The assumption that to be a credible academic one must first have experienced intelligence in practice is widely observed elsewhere, for example see Arcus, Drumhiller & Phythian (Bloomsbury, 2024), pp.16-17.

55 Participant #3, #45

56 Participant #5, #11, #14, #16. Crossan describes this assumption of legitimacy requiring prior experience in the IC as a “small-level bias”. Matthew D. Crosson, ‘Fragile friendships: Partnerships Between the Academy and Intelligence,’ *International Journal of intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 31:1 (2018), pp.142.

57 Inhibited liminality is mentioned by Crosston, p.143 - “bias on both sides....creates roadblocks that prevents quality candidates from trying to be proficient in both worlds”.

58 Participants #13, #34.

59 Participant #1

60 Participant #41

61 Participant #41

62 Participant #31.

63 Participant #3 did observe “It would probably be helpful for managers and supervisors to have a better understanding of academia....”

64 Participant #1

65 Participant #2, #1

66 Participant #10

67 Participant #2

68 Participant #47

69 Participant #47

70 Participant #47

71 See Peter Grace, *The Intelligence Intellectuals: Social Scientists and the Making of the CIA*, Georgetown University Press (Georgetown, 2026).

72 See George Heagney, “Staff concerned as Massey University appears to press ahead with cuts,” Stuff.co.nz, 22 December 2023. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/301030627/staff-concerned-as-massey-university-appears-to-press-ahead-with-cuts>

73 NZDF, NZ Police, Corrections, GCSB and NZSIS are the largest employers of intelligence staff and were exempted from the 2026 reductions. However, NZ Customs, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) all maintain intelligence units. See Glenn McConnell, “These are the Government departments on the chopping block,” Stuff.co.nz, 19 May 2026. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/politics/360980829/these-are-government-departments-chopping-block>

74 “Ombudsman to investigate allegations Ministry of Education officials tried to circumvent Official Information Act”, RNZ 25 September 2026, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/education/1572339/ombudsman-to-investigate-allegations-ministry-of-education-officials-tried-to-circumvent-official-information-act>

75 Richard Kerbaj, *The Secret History of the Five Eyes: The Untold Story of the International Spy Network*, Blink (London, 2022), p.xii.

76 John Battersby & Rhys Ball, The Phantom Eye: New Zealand and the Five Eyes, *Intelligence and National Security*, 38:6 (2023), p.932. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2023.2212557>