

POSITION DESCRIPTION

AI Adoption and Business Intelligence Lead – Research

Reports to:	Director Commercial & Business Partnerships
Division:	DVCR Research Office – Commercial & Business Partnerships
Tenure:	Permanent
Location:	Hamilton/ Tauranga
Date:	February 2026

Vision

Ko te tangata

A research-intensive university providing a globally connected, innovative and inclusive studenty experience in an environment characterised by a commitment to diversity, respect for Indigenous knowledge, and high levels of community engagement.

Values

Ko te mana o Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato ka herea ki tō tātou:

- Tū ngātahi me te Māori
- Mahi pono
- Whakanui i ngā huarahi hou
- Whakarewa i te hiringa i te mahara

The University of Waikato places a high value on:

- Partnership with Māori
- Acting with integrity
- Celebrating diversity
- Promoting creativity

1. GENERAL

- The Commercial & Business Partnerships division is a strategic function within the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (DVCR) Office, dedicated to driving research growth, innovation, and impact.
- The University of Waikato has launched an ambitious Research Plan 2026-2030, aiming to transform its research profile through bold thinking that makes a difference. Central to this plan are ambitious targets to grow total research revenue.

- To successfully execute this strategy, the DVCR Office requires sophisticated, data-driven decision-making capabilities. The research landscape is complex, requiring a bridge between technical data systems and strategic research leadership.
- The AI Adoption and Business Intelligence Lead acts as a strategic interface between the DVCR Office's research ambitions and the University's digital capabilities. Collaborating closely with the Director of Information Technology Services (ITS) and the wider ITS team, this role champions the adoption of AI-enabled workflows and translates complex data into actionable business intelligence to support the achievement of the University's research goals.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

- Serve as the strategic lead for adopting AI tools and business intelligence practices within the Research Office to modernize research administration and planning.
- Partner with ITS to leverage enterprise data platforms (e.g., Databricks), translating business requirements into technical specifications for data engineering teams.
- Drive the cultural adoption of AI and data-driven decision-making by upskilling staff and demonstrating high-value use cases.
- Provide senior leadership with predictive insights, scenario modelling, and strategic reporting to inform resource allocation and portfolio management.
- Ensure the Research Plan 2026-2030 is supported by robust, evidence-based intelligence regarding funding trends, partnership opportunities, and performance gaps.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal:

- Director Commercial & Business Partnerships
- Director of ITS and wider ITS team
- DVCR Research Office team
- Business Development Managers
- Directors of Research Institutes and Centres
- Associate Deans Research
- Pro-Vice Chancellors and Heads of Schools
- Finance team
- Marketing and Communications teams
- Academic and research staff

External:

- External research funding agencies
- Industry and commercial partners
- Benchmarking and sector data providers
- Technology and AI solution providers (in collaboration with ITS)

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

AI Adoption & Tool Deployment

- Champion the adoption of University-approved AI tools (e.g., Databricks Genie, Microsoft Copilot) across the Research Office to enhance productivity and decision-making.
- Identify high-value use cases for automation within research administration workflows and partner with ITS to deploy appropriate AI solutions.
- Develop and deliver training, guidelines, and "best practice" playbooks to upskill internal teams in AI literacy and data utilization.
- Monitor the user experience and effectiveness of deployed AI tools, providing feedback to ITS for continuous improvement of the analytical environment.
- Foster a culture of innovation by showcasing successful AI implementations and their impact on administrative efficiency.

Business Intelligence & Research Planning

- Lead the design and implementation of strategic Business Intelligence (BI) dashboards that visualize progress against the Research Plan 2026-2030 targets.
- Develop predictive models and scenario analyses to forecast research revenue, helping leadership anticipate funding gaps and opportunities.
- Translate complex dataset trends into clear, narrative-driven strategic recommendations for the DVCR and Director of Commercial & Business Partnerships.
- Provide data-driven evidence to support the development of annual operational plans and long-term research strategies.
- Ensure BI outputs are accessible and understandable for non-technical stakeholders, enabling self-service insights where appropriate.

Strategic Analysis & Insights

- Conduct deep-dive analysis into specific portfolios (e.g., Māori research excellence, Pacific research growth, postgraduate success) to identify drivers of success and barriers to entry.
- Analyze external market data and global funding trends to benchmark University performance against domestic and international competitors.
- Synthesize data from disparate sources (Finance, HR, Research Information Systems) to provide a holistic view of institutional research performance.
- Translate complex technical findings into strategic advice that influences policy and investment decisions.

Stakeholder Engagement & Translation

- Act as the primary business partner ("Product Owner") to the Director of ITS and wider ITS team, defining research data requirements and validating that technical deliverables meet business needs.
- Specify business rules for data quality and monitor outputs, escalating systemic data issues to data owners for remediation.
- Facilitate strategic workshops with Heads of Schools, Associate Deans, and Institute Directors to interpret data insights and formulate action plans.
- Bridge the gap between technical IT teams and academic leadership, ensuring clear communication and alignment of objectives.

Team Contribution

- Work effectively and collaboratively as a member of the wider Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (DVCR) Office.
- Share knowledge and actively build analytical capability across the team through mentoring and training.
- Work with other team members on projects.
- Support a positive culture and morale.
- Comply with and undertake responsibilities set out in the University's Health and Safety Policy

Continuous Improvement

- Actively contribute to the ongoing development and improvement of data requirements and reporting frameworks.
- Keep abreast of emerging trends in AI and research analytics to maintain a competitive advantage.

5. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The AI Adoption and Business Intelligence Lead will be performing satisfactorily when:

- Strategic BI tools, dashboards and reports are delivered on time, providing clear, actionable insights that drive strategy.
- Adoption rates of AI tools within the Research Office and wider Research Operations show measurable growth, supported by effective training and guidance.
- Strategic recommendations are valued by leadership and demonstrably inform decision-making processes.
- Collaboration with the Director of ITS and wider ITS teams is effective, seamless, and results in high-quality data deliverables.
- Data quality issues are proactively identified, documented, and escalated to the appropriate data owners for resolution.
- There is a demonstrable contribution to the achievement of research revenue targets through data-driven insights.
- Stakeholder satisfaction with analytical support and communication is consistently high.
- Advice provided complies with professional standards, University policies and procedures, and supports the University's strategic objectives.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Essential

- Bachelor's degree in Business, Data Science, Analytics, Research Management, or a related field.

Desirable

- Postgraduate qualification (Master's or PhD) in Business Analytics, Research Management, or a related discipline.
- Professional certifications in Business Intelligence, Change Management, or AI implementation.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE

Essential

- 3-5 years of experience in Business Intelligence, Strategic Planning, or Research Strategy roles.
- Proven experience in applying AI tools to business problems and driving user adoption (focus on application rather than backend development).
- Strong data literacy with the ability to define data requirements and validate outputs.
- Strategic thinking capability with the ability to translate technical data into actionable business strategies and narratives.
- Experience working as a bridge between business units and IT/Technical teams.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to influence stakeholders at all levels.
- Commitment to equal opportunity and to the University's partnership with Māori as intended by the Treaty of Waitangi. Demonstrated awareness of Māori and Pacific cultures.
- Current full driver's license.

Preferred

- Experience in Change Management or Digital Transformation projects
- Understanding of the NZ tertiary education sector and research funding landscape.
- Familiarity with querying data (SQL) to validate insights (without needing to be a data engineer).
- Experience working within an enterprise architecture framework (e.g., understanding of Medallion architecture).
- Experience working with Māori or Pacific research context.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Strategic thinker who sees connections between data patterns and organizational goals.
- Intellectually curious with a passion for discovering insights in data.
- Innovative mindset toward AI adoption and process improvement.
- Excellent communicator able to make complex data accessible and compelling.
- Collaborative team player who builds relationships across organizational boundaries.
- Self-directed and proactive in identifying opportunities for improvement.
- Adaptable to changing priorities and comfortable with ambiguity.
- Results-oriented with a focus on delivering value through insights.
- Commitment to diversity principles and the University's partnership with Māori as intended by the Treaty of Waitangi.

March 2026