

The University of Waikato
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Associate Director, Student Experience

Reports to:	Director of Student Services
Division:	Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic (DVCA)
Tenure:	Continuing
Location:	Hamilton
Date:	17 June 2026

Vision

Ko te tangata

A research-intensive university providing a globally connected, innovative and inclusive student 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 Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) (DVCA) is responsible for teaching and learning, curriculum oversight, academic governance and quality assurance, student administration and enrolment, and the pastoral care and support of students. The DVCA portfolio integrates academic leadership and professional services to ensure a

coherent, high-quality and student-centred academic experience, from admission through to progression, completion and graduation.

Situated within the DVCA Portfolio, Student Experience plays a critical role in creating a welcoming, connected, and student-centred environment that supports success, belonging, and engagement across the student lifecycle. It provides integrated, high-quality services and experiences across enquiries, student voice and representation, pre-arrival, arrival and orientation, on campus experience, and stewardship of Te Manawa as a vibrant student hub.

The portfolio includes:

- Enquiries: Oversees digital and in person enquiry channels, frontline student support and operations, ensuring responsive, consistent, and student-centred service delivery across core touchpoints.
- Student Experience and Engagement: Oversees student voice and representation, pre-arrival communications, arrival and orientation programmes, and initiatives that enhance connection, belonging, and the on-campus experience.
- Te Manawa Operations: Oversees the physical student-facing environment within Te Manawa, including coordination of a 24/7 building and weekend service model to ensure spaces are safe, welcoming, well managed, and aligned to student needs.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

The Associate Director, Student Experience provides strategic leadership, operational oversight, and continuous improvement of the University's student experience functions across key student touchpoints and service environments.

The role is responsible for ensuring the delivery of high quality, student-centred services and experiences that foster belonging, engagement, wellbeing, and successful navigation of university life.

The position leads a team of managers and professional staff to deliver integrated services encompassing digital and in person enquiries and operations, student voice and representation, pre-arrival, arrival and orientation, on campus experience initiatives, and the effective operation of Te Manawa including 24/7 building and weekend service coverage.

The Associate Director plays a key role in aligning student experience systems, services, spaces, and programmes with institutional goals, and in fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement across all areas of the student experience portfolio.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal:

- Associate Directors and Managers across student-facing services
- Division Directors
- Communications, Marketing and Future Students
- Property Services
- Events team
- Information Technology Services (ITS)
- Office of the AVC Pacific and Pacific student support roles
- Office of the PVC Māori and Māori student support services
- Waikato Students' Union and student representative groups
- Students

External:

- Prospective students and whānau
- Community partners and service providers
- Peer universities and sector networks
- Orientation, events, and student engagement partners

- External vendors and contracted service providers
- Emergency services and security partners
- Members of the public

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Leadership

- Provide strategic leadership and direction for all student experience functions, ensuring services, programmes, and physical environments are welcoming, inclusive, efficient, and student-centred.
- Lead planning and decision-making that align Student Experience activities with University strategy, values, and partnership with Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Service Delivery

- Oversee the delivery of integrated student-facing services including digital and in person enquiries and operations, student voice and representation, pre-arrival, arrival and orientation, on campus experience initiatives, and stewardship of Te Manawa.
- Drive continuous improvement and innovation to enhance responsiveness, accessibility, belonging, and the overall student experience across physical and digital touchpoints.
- Use data, feedback, and student insight to monitor performance, inform planning, and identify opportunities for service enhancement and experience design.
- Manage budgets, resources, operational plans, and service models to ensure sustainability, effectiveness, and alignment with institutional priorities, including 24/7 building opening and weekend service delivery where required.

Collaboration

- Build and maintain strong partnerships with academic and professional staff, student representatives, and external stakeholders to ensure services and experiences are integrated, responsive, and aligned to student needs.
- Provide expert advice and information that supports institutional strategy, service design, student engagement, and continuous improvement.
- Represent the portfolio in University committees, working groups, and sector networks to promote best practice, student voice, and shared learning.

People and Culture

- Lead, support, and develop managers and professional staff to deliver high performing, student-centred services and experiences.
- Foster a culture of collaboration, accountability, hospitality, and continuous improvement across all areas of the student experience portfolio.
- Champion inclusive practices and a positive workplace culture that reflects the University's values and commitment to partnership with Māori.

Compliance

- Ensure compliance with University policies, relevant regulations, health and safety requirements, and sound operational practices through robust governance and quality assurance.
- Participate in the maintenance of a safe and healthy work environment for self and others including students. Comply with and undertake responsibilities set out in the University's Health and Safety Policy.

5. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Associate Director, Student Experience will be performing satisfactorily when:

- Student-facing services and experiences — including enquiries and operations, student voice and representation, pre-arrival, arrival and orientation, on campus experience initiatives, and

Te Manawa operations — are delivered effectively, responsively, and in accordance with University expectations and service standards.

- Student-centred, accessible, and welcoming services are continuously improved, resulting in enhanced student engagement, belonging, and stakeholder satisfaction.
- Collaboration with academic and professional staff, student representatives, and service partners supports an integrated and high quality student experience across the lifecycle.
- Managers and staff are well led, supported, and developed, contributing to a cohesive, high performing, and service focused culture.
- Governance, compliance, health and safety, and operational obligations are met to a high standard, including the effective management of Te Manawa as a 24/7 and weekend service environment.
- Financial, human, spatial, and technological resources are managed responsibly and effectively to achieve strategic and operational goals.
- Data, feedback, and student insight are used to evaluate performance, inform decision-making, and drive innovation and improvement.
- Leadership and conduct demonstrate integrity, respect, and alignment with the University's values and partnership with Māori.
- Advice provided complies with professional standards, University policies and procedures and supports the University's strategic objectives.
- Safe and healthy work practices are followed that comply with University policies and procedures, relevant work standards and statutory obligations.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Essential

- A postgraduate qualification and relevant experience OR a relevant bachelor's degree and extensive experience.

Desirable

- A relevant postgraduate qualification (e.g. management, leadership, or public administration).

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Demonstrated experience in leading student experience, student services, frontline service delivery, or a comparable complex service environment.
- Proven ability to provide strategic leadership and manage people, teams, and service operations effectively.
- Demonstrated success in leading service improvement, change, or innovation in student-facing environments.
- Strong understanding of student engagement, service design, and the operational requirements of complex student-facing services and spaces.
- Capability in managing budgets, resources, rosters, and performance outcomes across extended service hours or multi-channel environments.
- Proven ability to design and implement integrated, technology enabled services and customer-focused processes.
- Excellent communication and relationship building skills, with the ability to engage constructively across diverse stakeholders including students and representative groups.
- Strong analytical, written and presentation skills.
- Demonstrated understanding of and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and mātauranga Māori, and the ability to apply this in leadership, decision-making, and service delivery in ways that support meaningful partnership with Māori, advance equitable outcomes, and reflect the University's founding relationships and strategic obligations.

Preferred

- Experience working with student service systems, customer relationship platforms, or institutional reporting tools.
- Understanding of the New Zealand tertiary education environment and the factors that shape student experience, belonging, and success.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Inclusive, visible, and collaborative leadership style that values diversity of thought and experience.
- Strategic and solutions focused thinker who translates vision into effective action and high quality service delivery.
- Adaptable, resilient, and motivated to foster continuous improvement, hospitality, and service excellence.
- Demonstrated integrity, professionalism, and sound judgement in decision-making.
- Committed to upholding the University's values and fostering a positive, respectful, and student-centred culture.
- Commitment to diversity principles and the University's partnership with Māori as intended by the Treaty of Waitangi.