

The University of Waikato Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

POSITION DESCRIPTION

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, STUDENT LEARNING

Reports to:	Director of Academic Services
Division:	DVC Academic
Tenure:	Continuing
Location:	Hamilton
Date:	3 August 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 Learning plays a critical role in enabling student success through accessible, high-quality learning support, capability development and engagement services. The area provides leadership for student learning services, including academic literacies (e.g. information, digital, and AI literacy), careers and employability, and accessibility, ensuring students are well prepared to succeed both during their studies and beyond graduation.

Student Learning supports the University's learning and teaching goals by ensuring students have access to the services, resources, guidance and learning experiences they need to participate fully, build capability and progress successfully through their programmes. In doing so, Student Learning plays a key role in supporting the development and implementation of graduate attributes, including those related to digital fluency, ethical and responsible use of technology, and preparedness for future employment pathways.

Student Learning leads the design, delivery and continuous improvement of services that strengthen learning, participation, progression and transition to future study or work. This includes the effective and responsible use of education technologies to enhance learning experiences, and to support sustainable, scalable models of delivery that can respond to changing student needs and modes of study.

Student Learning includes:

- **Student Learning Services:** leadership of services, programmes and initiatives that support students to develop academic learning confidence, core learning capabilities and effective engagement with learning technologies, enabling successful participation and progression in study across a range of learning contexts.
- **Careers and Employability:** leadership of services, resources and development opportunities that support students to explore and identify pathways, build employability capability, and prepare for successful transition into employment. This includes supporting the development of graduate capabilities relevant to contemporary and emerging workplaces, working in partnership across the University to ensure students are well prepared to navigate changing employment contexts.
- **Accessibility:** leadership of services and institutional practice that support equitable access, participation and success for disabled students and others requiring accessibility-related advice, support, or adjustments, contributing to inclusive learning environments and positive student experience.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

The Associate Director, Student Learning provides strategic and operational leadership across the Student Learning portfolio, ensuring services are student-centred, accessible, connected and aligned with University priorities for learning, participation and success.

Reporting to the Director of Academic Services the role leads managers and professional teams and provides advice on service design, operational performance, accessibility, student capability development and opportunities to strengthen learning support and student success. The position is responsible for ensuring the University delivers high quality, technology enabled and inclusive services across student learning, careers and employability, and accessibility and that these operate as an integrated contribution to the student experience.

The role also contributes to University-wide planning and collaboration to ensure students are well supported to access learning, build capability, engage successfully in study and prepare for future pathways.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Internal** AVCs, Directors, Associate Directors and staff across the DVCA portfolio
Associate Deans, Heads of School and Division Directors
Teaching and learning leaders and student support partners
Information Technology Services and digital learning support teams
Communications and Marketing
People and Capability and other professional services teams
Office of the DVC Māori
Accessibility and inclusion partners across the University
Students and student representatives
Other divisional and faculty staff
- External** Relevant accessibility, library, careers and employability networks
Professional bodies and external partners
Community organisations and service providers
Vendors and digital platform providers
Employers and industry partners
Peer institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally
Waikato Students' Union
Students, whānau and members of the public
Other external stakeholders relevant to the portfolio

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Leadership

- Provide strategic leadership informed by sound pedagogical understanding, evidence-based practice, and a commitment to student learning, engagement, accessibility and inclusive educational practice.
- Lead an integrated portfolio approach that aligns services, resources and learning opportunities with University strategy, values, partnership with Māori, and priorities for student success.
- Oversee high-quality, technology-enabled and inclusive services across student learning, accessibility, and careers and employability, ensuring effective service models support participation, capability development, progression and transition to future pathways.
- Use data, feedback and user insight to monitor performance, identify risk, inform investment, and drive continuous improvement, innovation and improved student outcomes.
- Manage budgets, resources and operational plans to ensure sustainability, value for money, operational effectiveness and alignment with institutional priorities.

Student Learning and Accessibility

- Ensure accessibility services and institutional practices support timely advice, reasonable adjustments and inclusive learning environments that enable student success.
- Oversee training, guidance and support that help students develop the skills, confidence and strategies needed to participate effectively and progress in their studies.
- Promote a coherent approach to learning support and accessibility across the University, using evidence and collaboration to remove barriers and improve outcomes.

Careers and Employability

- Lead careers and employability services, resources and initiatives that assist students to explore pathways, develop capability and prepare for employment or further study.
- Ensure careers and employability activities are well connected to the wider student learning experience and support students at different stages of their journey.
- Build relationships with internal and external partners to strengthen employability, career

readiness and student opportunity.

Collaboration

- Build and maintain strong partnerships with academic and professional staff to ensure portfolio services, systems, and resources support learning, teaching, and student success.
- Provide expert advice and information that supports institutional strategy, service improvement, accessibility and quality assurance across the portfolio.

People and Culture

- Lead, support and develop managers and professional staff to deliver high performing, student-focused and service-oriented functions across the portfolio.
- Foster a culture of collaboration, accountability, learning and continuous improvement that reflects the University's values and commitment to partnership with Māori.
- Champion inclusive practice, workforce capability development and change leadership to ensure the portfolio is responsive, resilient and future-ready.

Compliance

- Ensure compliance with University policies, external regulations, statutory obligations and reporting requirements through robust governance, quality assurance and risk management.
- 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 Learning will be performing satisfactorily when:

- The Student Learning portfolio has a clear and effective direction, with priorities aligned to student learning, participation and success.
- Student learning, accessibility, and careers and employability are well coordinated, evidence-informed and responsive to student and University needs.
- Accessibility services and inclusive practices support equitable participation and contribute positively to student engagement and success.
- Students have access to effective services, resources and guidance that strengthen learning capability, confidence and progression.
- Data, feedback and evidence are used effectively to assess performance, identify risk and drive improvement across service quality and student outcomes.
- Managers and staff are well led, supported and developed, contributing to a cohesive, high performing and service-focused culture.
- Governance, compliance and reporting obligations are met to a high standard, with clear documentation and timely reporting.
- Financial, human and technological resources are managed responsibly and effectively to achieve strategic and operational priorities.
- 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 and operational 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 relevant bachelors qualification and substantial leadership experience in a related field, or an equivalent combination of qualifications and experience.

Desirable

- A postgraduate qualification in education, management, leadership or a related field.
- A professional qualification relevant to one or more areas within the portfolio.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Demonstrated understanding of pedagogical principles, student learning and development, and inclusive educational practice in a tertiary or similarly complex environment.
- Demonstrated leadership experience in a complex organisation, including leading managers or professional teams across diverse service functions. Including developing team capability through coaching and feedback, setting clear expectations, supporting performance and wellbeing, and creating a positive, inclusive team culture.
- Proven ability to provide strategic and operational leadership across student-facing or learning support services and to lead service improvement or organisational change.
- Demonstrated success in improving student learning support, participation, accessibility, employability, service quality or related outcomes.
- Strong understanding of service design, accessibility, student capability development and the use of data and insight to improve outcomes.
- Demonstrated capability in managing budgets, resources and performance outcomes.
- Proven ability to provide sound advice to senior leaders and to represent the University effectively in internal and external forums.
- Excellent communication, relationship management and influencing skills, with the ability to engage constructively across diverse stakeholders.
- 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 in one or more of the following areas: student learning support, accessibility, careers and employability, or learning and development.
- Understanding of the New Zealand tertiary education environment and associated regulatory and quality frameworks.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Inclusive, consultative and collaborative leadership style that values diversity of thought and experience.
- Strategic and solutions focused thinker who translates vision into effective action.

- Resilient and adaptable, responding positively to change and supporting others through periods of transition or system change.
- Collaborative team leader who values shared ownership, supports capability development, and fosters a respectful, inclusive, and high-trust working environment.
- Demonstrated integrity, professionalism and sound judgement in decision-making.
- Committed to upholding the University's values and fostering a positive, respectful workplace culture.