

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Associate Director, Change & Improvement

Reports to:	Director, Performance & Enablement
Division:	Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic (DVCA)
Tenure:	Continuing
Location:	Hamilton
Date:	July 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.

The University is delivering a programme of transformation to create a more connected, data-informed and student-centred service environment. This includes significant redesign of student-facing services, operating models, and enabling systems.

The Change & Improvement function plays a critical role in ensuring these initiatives are successfully designed, delivered, and embedded across the University.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

The Associate Director, Change & Improvement provides strategic and operational leadership for business improvement and change management across the Student Support Programme (and broader transformation initiatives as required).

This role is responsible for:

- Leading a team of change and improvement practitioners
- Overseeing the design and delivery of end-to-end change initiatives
- Embedding consistent approaches to service design, process improvement, and change management
- Ensuring successful adoption of new ways of working across the University

The Associate Director will operate at both a strategic and hands-on level, guiding complex initiatives while maintaining oversight of delivery quality, stakeholder engagement, and benefits realisation.

This role extends the practitioner responsibilities of business improvement and change into programme leadership, governance influence, and people leadership

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal: Director, Performance & Enablement
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic leadership team
Pro Vice Chancellors
DVC Māori team
AVC Pacific team
Division/Faculty Directors and student support teams
ITS and Student Systems (CRM/SMS support, digital tools)
Equity, wellbeing and support units
Communications, HR and organisational development teams
Students and student representatives

External: Vendors, consultants or external service providers

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership and Planning

- Lead the development and execution of the Change & Improvement strategy aligned to programme and institutional priorities.
- Establish frameworks, standards, and methodologies for business improvement, service design, and change management.
- Contribute to programme governance, providing strategic advice, options, and recommendations.
- Ensure initiatives deliver measurable benefits aligned to student experience and operational efficiency.

People Leadership and Capability Development

- Lead, coach, and develop a team of change and improvement specialists.
- Build organisational capability in change management, service design, and continuous improvement.

- Foster a high-performing, collaborative team culture aligned with University values.
- Provide mentoring and quality assurance across all change and improvement activities.

Business Improvement and Service Design

- Develop, deliver and oversee current-state analysis, process mapping, and identification of improvement opportunities.
- Guide the development of future-state operating models, service designs, and workflows.
- Ensure consistency in service standards, KPIs, and performance frameworks.
- Drive opportunities for simplification, automation, and digital enablement.

Change Management

- Contribute directly to the practice of change management, being both practitioner and team leader.
- Oversee the development and delivery of change management strategies and plans across initiatives.
- Ensure robust change impact assessments, readiness planning, and adoption strategies.
- Provide leadership in communication, training, and stakeholder engagement approaches.
- Monitor adoption, embed sustainable change, and track benefits realisation.

Stakeholder Engagement and Influence

- Build strong, trusted relationships with senior leaders and key stakeholders.
- Lead co-design and engagement approaches across Divisions and service units.
- Act as a key interface between the programme delivery team and operational business units.
- Influence decision-making at governance and leadership levels.

Programme Delivery

- Oversee the mapping and delivery of all DVCA initiatives including multiple change and improvement workstreams.
- Ensure alignment across projects, dependencies, and sequencing of change.
- Identify and manage risks, issues, and interdependencies.
- Ensure high-quality documentation, reporting, and governance artefacts.

4. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Success in this role will be demonstrated by:

- Effective delivery and embedding of change initiatives across the University.
- Strong stakeholder engagement and leadership confidence.
- High-performing, capable Change & Improvement team.
- Clear, measurable improvements in service delivery, efficiency, and student experience.
- Consistent application of frameworks and methodologies.
- Successful adoption and sustainability of new ways of working.
- Visibility of DVCA programme delivery milestones, change impacts and risks
- Conduct demonstrates 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 degree with extensive leadership experience

TRAINING, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Essential

- Extensive experience in business improvement, service design, or business transformation
- Demonstrated leadership of change management in complex organisations (Prosci/ADKAR or equivalent preferred)
- Experience leading teams and developing capability
- Strong strategic thinking and programme-level planning capability
- Advanced stakeholder engagement and influencing skills
- Strong analytical, problem-solving, and decision-making skills
- Experience delivering large-scale transformation initiatives
- 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 tertiary education or public sector environments
- Familiarity with CRM, SMS and digital workflow systems
- Understanding of the student lifecycle and support services
- Experience embedding continuous improvement practices

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Strategic, pragmatic, and outcomes-focused
- Strong leader with the ability to inspire and influence
- Highly collaborative and relationship-focused
- Comfortable operating in complexity and ambiguity
- Culturally responsive and committed to equity for Māori and Pacific students
- High levels of integrity, professionalism, and sound judgement
- Committed to continuous improvement and service excellence
- Committed to upholding the University's values and fostering a positive, respectful workplace culture.
- Commitment to diversity principles