

POSITION DESCRIPTION

**ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
PLANNING, PERFORMANCE AND ANALYTICS**

Reports to:	Director, Performance and Enablement
Division:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic
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.

Situated within the DVCA Portfolio, the Planning, Performance and Analytics team provides the

University's central analytics and insights capability, partnering across the institution to support evidence-informed planning, performance management, statutory reporting and strategic decision making. The team designs and maintains trusted reporting and dashboard products, delivers timely analysis and insight on priority questions, and builds contemporary data science and analytics practice that is robust, well-governed, and fit for operational use. Working closely with leaders, IT, and data governance partners, the team helps translate complex organisational challenges into clear analytical questions and actionable insight, while promoting ethical, culturally responsive, and responsible use of data and AI.

The team's scope of work includes:

- Designing and continuously improving modern analytics outputs aligned with organisational standards for security, scalability, and governance.
- Statutory reporting including production of the Single Data Return.
- Providing trusted advice and insight to leaders, translating strategic priorities and operational questions into clear analytics, interpretation and recommendations that support confident decision making.
- Delivering high-quality dashboards, reporting, and performance monitoring—using agreed definitions and measures to provide timely, consistent, and actively used insight into organisational performance and progress.
- Forecasting and trend analysis using modelled behaviours and knowledge of institutional developments.
- Championing ethical and responsible use of data and AI, including privacy, policy and legislative alignment, and culturally responsive practice consistent with the University's partnership with Māori and commitment to equity.
- Co-ordinating and delivering survey and evaluation information gathering—using consistent instruments, sampling, and analysis approaches to provide reliable insight into experience, outcomes, and impact.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

The Associate Director Planning, Performance & Analytics leads the University's central planning, performance and analytics capability, embedded within the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic portfolio and operating with university-wide scope. The role provides stewardship of a specialist function that supports university-wide strategy, planning, performance monitoring and reporting, ensuring leaders have access to trusted, consistent and decision-ready insight.

The role has overall accountability for the quality, coherence and sustainability of the University's planning and performance analytics capability. This includes establishing and maintaining shared analytical standards, methods and governance arrangements that ensure insights are rigorous, reproducible and fit for ongoing operational use. While the role brings advanced technical expertise and may contribute directly to complex analytical work where appropriate, its primary focus is on enabling a capable, resilient team to deliver high-quality analytics consistently and at scale, rather than on individual delivery.

The Associate Director provides leadership and line management to a small specialist team, builds and maintains effective working relationships with stakeholders across the University, and acts as a trusted advisor to senior leaders on the appropriate use of data and analytics to support evidence-informed planning, performance management and decision-making. The role champions ethical, culturally responsive and responsible use of data and AI, and fosters a team culture that reflects the University's values, including partnership with Māori, intellectual rigour, shared ownership and continuous improvement.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Internal:**
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic and senior leaders across the University
 - Associate Directors across DVCA portfolio
 - Director of the Vice-Chancellor's Office
 - Academic Division and faculty leadership
 - Professional Services leaders and teams (Finance, Student Services, Student Systems, Research Office, Marketing and Communications, People and Capability)
 - Information Technology Services (data platforms, architecture, integration, and security)
 - University committees and working groups relevant to planning, performance, data governance, and strategic reporting
- External:**
- Peer institutions and relevant sector bodies and government agencies
 - Vendors, platform providers, and implementation partners
 - External research and analytics collaborators (where engaged for specialist advice or joint analytical work)
 - Tertiary Education Commission
 - Auditors, regulators, and accreditation bodies (where analytical evidence or data quality assurance is required)

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Technical Practice and Innovation

- Design, develop, and deploy advanced analytical models and data science solutions - including predictive models, machine learning applications, and statistical analyses - that directly inform institutional planning, performance management, and strategic decision making.
- Establish and maintain rigorous methodological standards across the team, including reproducible analysis, version-controlled code, peer review, and documentation sufficient for operational handover and independent audit.
- Evaluate and selectively adopt emerging data science techniques, tools, and frameworks, ensuring the team's methods remain current, well-justified, and fit for a production analytics environment.
- Apply a breadth of quantitative methods - including statistical modelling, classification, clustering, time series forecasting, and text analytics - to address complex and high-priority institutional questions.
- Ensure all analytical models and outputs are production-ready: validated, documented, monitored for performance over time, and maintainable by the broader team without dependence on any individual.
- Conduct senior technical review of the team's analytical work, providing structured feedback that raises quality and builds individual capability simultaneously.

Analytics and Insight Delivery

- Lead end-to-end delivery of complex analytical projects, from problem definition and data acquisition through modelling, validation, interpretation, and stakeholder communication.
- Translate complex strategic and operational questions into well-formed analytical problems, identifying the most appropriate methods, data sources, and level of analytical precision required.
- Produce clear, decision-ready outputs - written reports, visualisations, and oral presentations - that communicate findings and their implications accurately and persuasively to non-technical audiences.

- Oversee the quality and fitness-for-purpose of the team's dashboards, reporting products, and performance monitoring tools, ensuring they are accurate, consistent, and aligned with agreed definitions and measures.
- Maintain awareness of organisational priorities and proactively identify where analytical insight could add value, bringing questions to leaders' attention rather than waiting to be asked.
- Oversee planning and delivery of survey and evaluation information-gathering, using consistent instruments, sampling, and analysis approaches to generate reliable insight into experience, outcomes, and impact.

Team Leadership and Development

- Provide day-to-day leadership and line management for direct reports, including regular 1:1s, workload management, performance conversations, and support for individual development.
- Coach and develop team members in both technical practice and professional skills, helping each person grow their analytical capability and operate with increasing autonomy.
- Establish shared ways of working - code standards, peer review processes, documentation practices, and sprint or delivery rhythms - that build collective capability and reduce key-person risk.
- Manage team workload and priorities in partnership with the Director, ensuring the team's capacity is focused on the highest-value work and that delivery commitments are realistic and met.
- Foster a team culture defined by intellectual curiosity, psychological safety, shared ownership of quality, and genuine commitment to continuous improvement and wellbeing.

Collaboration and Advisory

- Act as a trusted senior advisor to University leaders, providing expert guidance on the use of data and analytics to address complex strategic and operational challenges.
- Work closely with Information Technology Services and data governance partners to ensure analytical solutions are built on reliable, well-governed data foundations and aligned with enterprise architecture and security standards.
- Build and sustain stakeholder confidence in data and analytics, ensuring insights are credible, clearly communicated, and demonstrably useful to the people who rely on them.
- Contribute to an organisation-wide culture of evidence-informed planning, performance management, and continuous improvement.

Compliance

- Ensure the production of an accurate and timely Single Data Return and course registers.
- Oversee the delivery of other statutory reporting including research degree completions.
- Support the delivery of high quality advice on funding rule/condition changes and enable facilitation of consequent system changes.
- Champion strong practice in data ethics, privacy, and the responsible development and deployment of analytical models and AI tools, including transparency, fairness, and explainability.
- Ensure all data science and analytics practice aligns with University policies, legislative requirements, and community expectations.
- Support culturally responsive and inclusive use of data, consistent with the University's partnership with Māori and its commitment to equity.
- Ensure compliance with the University's Health and Safety responsibilities.

Note: Staff have an annual Objectives, Development and Reflection (ODR) meeting with their manager.

5. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Associate Director Planning, Performance & Analytics will be performing satisfactorily when:

- Advanced analytical models and data science solutions are designed and delivered to a high standard of technical rigour, with outputs that are validated, reproducible, well-documented, and demonstrably production-ready.
- A shared methodological standard is established and actively maintained across the team - including reproducible workflows, peer review, and documentation - sufficient for any team member to maintain or extend another's work.
- Complex analytical projects are delivered to agreed scope and timeframe, with findings communicated clearly and in a form that enables confident decision making by non-technical stakeholders.
- University leaders regard the team as the authoritative source of analytical insight, consistently receiving well-formed, credible, and actionable analysis that is directly connected to strategic and operational priorities.
- High-quality dashboards, reporting products, and performance monitoring tools are actively used by decision makers, maintained to agreed definitions, and improved iteratively in response to stakeholder feedback.
- A capable, engaged, and high-performing team is sustained, with each team member receiving regular coaching, clear development goals, and meaningful opportunities to grow their analytical capability.
- Team workload is managed effectively, with delivery commitments met and capacity directed toward the highest-value work in alignment with organisational priorities.
- Effective collaboration with IT and data governance partners results in analytics solutions built on reliable, well-governed data foundations and aligned with enterprise standards.
- Strong ethical, responsible, and culturally responsive data and AI practices are embedded across all analytical work, aligned with University policy and legislative requirements.
- Senior stakeholders consistently endorse the quality and usefulness of analytical advice and team outputs, and regard the Associate Director, Planning, Performance and Analytics as a trusted technical authority and collaborative partner.
- Safe and healthy work practices are followed that comply with University policies and procedures, relevant work standards, and statutory obligations.
- Statutory and external reporting responsibilities within the portfolio are delivered accurately, on time, and in accordance with relevant government, funding, and regulatory requirements, including oversight of the Single Data Return, Research Degree Completion reporting, and associated data quality and validation processes.
- Course register, student record, and related reporting processes are continuously reviewed and improved so that data integrity, compliance risk management, and institutional readiness for audit, funding, and performance reporting are maintained

PERSON SPECIFICATION

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Essential

- A postgraduate qualification (Masters or equivalent) in data science, statistics, mathematics, computer science, or a closely related quantitative discipline, combined with extensive professional experience in a senior data science or analytics role in a complex organisation; or an equivalent combination of qualifications and demonstrated experience at principal or senior practitioner level.

Desirable

- Evidence of advanced research and applied analytical expertise.
- Formal training or certification in machine learning, statistical computing, people leadership, data governance, or responsible AI.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Demonstrated expertise in designing, building, and deploying advanced analytical models and data science solutions in a complex organisational environment, including predictive modelling, machine learning, and statistical inference.
- Strong proficiency in at least one primary data science programming language (Python or R), including relevant libraries for data manipulation, modelling, and visualisation (e.g. pandas, scikit-learn, tidyverse, ggplot2).
- Solid applied statistics foundations, including regression modelling, classification, clustering, time series analysis, and experimental or quasi-experimental design.
- Proven ability to operationalise analytical work: writing production-quality, version-controlled code; producing reproducible analyses; and documenting models sufficiently for peer review, handover, and audit.
- Experience with SQL and working with relational databases, data warehouses, or modern data platforms to extract, transform, and prepare analytical datasets at scale.
- Proven ability to translate complex strategic and operational challenges into well-formed analytical problems, and to communicate findings clearly and credibly to non-technical senior audiences.
- Experience with data visualisation platforms (e.g. Power BI, Tableau, or equivalent) and designing analytics products for sustained operational use.
- Demonstrated experience leading or providing technical mentorship to a team of data scientists or analysts, including line management, coaching, and building shared standards of practice.
- Strong understanding of data governance, data quality, privacy, security-by-design, and ethical and responsible use of data and AI.
- Demonstrated ability to build trusted relationships and influence across diverse stakeholder groups, including senior leaders and technical partners.
- 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 applying data science methods to institutional research questions in a tertiary education or other large complex public sector organisation.
- Experience with cloud-based analytics platforms and modern data infrastructure (e.g. Microsoft Azure, Databricks, or equivalent).
- Familiarity with MLOps principles and practices, including model monitoring, versioning, and deployment pipelines.
- Experience contributing to, or advising on the responsible organisational deployment of AI, including generative AI tools.
- Experience establishing shared performance definitions and improving data quality and reporting consistency across an organisation.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Deep technical curiosity combined with sound practical judgement - selecting the right method for the problem rather than defaulting to familiar approaches.
- Disciplined and rigorous, with the professional confidence to hold a high quality bar for their own work and the team's, and to name clearly when standards are not met.
- Clear and credible communicator, able to make complex quantitative concepts accessible and persuasive to non-technical audiences without oversimplifying.
- Genuinely interested in developing others - patient in coaching, generous in sharing knowledge, and committed to building a team that does not depend on any single individual.
- Consultative and collaborative; builds trust with technical peers and senior stakeholders through transparency, intellectual honesty, and consistent follow-through.
- Resilient and well organised, able to manage the competing demands of hands-on technical work and team leadership without allowing either to be consistently deprioritised.
- Strong alignment with the University's values, including partnership with Māori, respect for Indigenous knowledge, diversity, and community engagement.