

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Commercialisation Capability Lead (1.0 FTE)

Reports to:	Director Commercial & Business Partnerships
Division:	DVCR Research Office – Commercial & Business Partnerships
Tenure:	Permanent
Location:	Hamilton
Date:	October 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.

The University of Waikato is committed to strengthening its commercialisation capability to help university researchers translate publicly funded research into real-world impact. As part of its strategic direction, the University is expanding its end-to-end commercialisation services, from

disclosure and IP protection through to incubation, licensing, and venture creation, to ensure research outcomes deliver meaningful economic, social, and environmental benefits for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Central to this commitment is the development of a comprehensive capability building programme that lifts commercialisation awareness, skills, and engagement across the University's academic community. This includes the establishment and scaling of the Waikato University Incubation Programme (leveraging the University's Hiko Hub as physical incubation space), the creation of targeted e-learning resources, workshops, industry connection treks, and tailored support programmes for researchers at all stages of the commercialisation journey.

The Commercialisation Capability Lead is a senior role created to drive these initiatives, acting as the primary connector between researchers and the University's commercialisation services.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

The Commercialisation Capability Lead is responsible for driving the University of Waikato's commercialisation capability building agenda. This includes leading the design and delivery of programmes, content, and engagement initiatives that lift commercialisation awareness and skills across the academic community - encompassing the Waikato University Incubation Programme, e-learning and workshop content, industry connection treks, and strategic stakeholder relationships. The role serves as the primary connector between researchers and the University's end-to-end commercialisation services, fostering a culture shift from 'technology push' to 'market pull'.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal:

- Director Commercial & Business Partnerships
- Commercial & Business Partnerships team (BDMs, IP & Licensing)
- Embedded Commercialisation Leads within research institutes
- Deans of Schools and Pro Vice-Chancellors
- Academic and research staff across all faculties
- Hiko Hub operations team
- Research Office
- Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning
- Marketing, Communications, and Events teams
- Finance and Legal teams

External:

- Partner universities
- KiwiNet and Knowledge Commercialisation Australasia (KCA)
- Government innovation and research funding agencies
- External capability building programme providers and subject matter experts
- Startup ecosystem partners, mentors, advisors, and investors

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Incubation Programme Leadership

- Lead the design, establishment, and ongoing management of the Waikato University Incubation Programme, building on the successful pilot to create a scalable, faculty-wide offering.
- Manage the operational delivery of the incubation programme including cohort selection, programme design, mentor coordination, milestone tracking, and participant support.
- Leverage the Hiko Hub as dedicated physical incubation space for researcher-led ventures, coordinating with Hiko Hub operations to ensure optimal utilisation and researcher experience. Develop and maintain relationships with mentors, advisors, investors, and ecosystem partners to provide incubation participants with access to relevant expertise and networks.
- Support researcher-led ventures regardless of shareholding arrangements, ensuring incubation services are accessible across the full spectrum of commercialisation pathways.
- Track and report on incubation programme outcomes including ventures supported, funding raised, IP commercialised, and researcher engagement metrics.

Commercialisation Capability Building

- Design and commission a comprehensive suite of commercialisation capability building content including e-learning modules, workshops, seminars, guides, and resource materials targeted at academic staff across all career stages.
- Source and manage external providers and subject matter experts to deliver specialist capability building programmes and content where required.
- Develop and deliver targeted content that enables researchers to understand and engage with the University's commercialisation pathways — from initial disclosure through IP protection, licensing, and venture creation.
- Organise and facilitate domestic and international industry connection treks built around the strategic priorities of the University's research institutes, connecting researchers directly with industry, investors, and commercialisation ecosystems.
- Create tailored support programmes for researchers at different stages of the commercialisation journey, from early awareness through to active commercialisation engagement.
- Collaborate with the Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning and other internal teams to ensure e-learning content meets institutional standards and is effectively deployed.

Stakeholder Engagement & Relationship Management

- Build and maintain productive relationships with Deans of Schools, Pro Vice-Chancellors, and senior academic leaders to embed commercialisation awareness and engagement across all faculties.
- Engage directly with individual researchers to understand their commercialisation needs, provide guidance, and connect them with appropriate support and resources.
- Interface with external stakeholders including partner universities (e.g. AUT, University of Canterbury, Wellington UniVentures), KiwiNet, Knowledge Commercialisation Australasia (KCA), and other ecosystem partners.
- Represent the University at relevant national and international commercialisation, innovation, and incubation forums and events.
- Work collaboratively with the Commercial & Business Partnerships team, the Research Office, and embedded Commercialisation Leads within research institutes to ensure an integrated approach to researcher support.

Programme Management & Reporting

- Contribute to the achievement of programme deliverables, milestones, and reporting requirements aligned to the University's commercialisation strategy.
- Develop and maintain programme plans, delivery schedules, and progress reports for all capability building initiatives.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of capability building programmes through participant feedback, engagement metrics, and commercialisation outcomes data.
- Identify opportunities for continuous improvement and innovation in programme design and delivery.
- Support the Director Commercial & Business Partnerships with budget tracking and expenditure reporting for capability building initiatives.

Team Contribution & General

- Work effectively as a senior member of the wider Commercial & Business Partnerships team and DVCR Office, providing strategic input and supporting colleagues across portfolios.
- Share knowledge, insights, and best practice from the commercialisation and incubation sector to strengthen the team's overall capability.
- Support a positive culture and morale, contributing to a high-performance team environment.
- Comply with and undertake responsibilities set out in the University's Health and Safety Policy.
- Actively contribute to the ongoing development and improvement of commercialisation processes, frameworks, and engagement models.
- Undertake other duties as reasonably required by the Director Commercial & Business Partnerships.

5. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Commercialisation Capability Lead will be performing satisfactorily when:

- The Waikato University Incubation Programme is successfully established, scaled across faculties, and delivering measurable outcomes including ventures supported, researcher participation rates, and commercialisation milestones achieved.
- A comprehensive and accessible suite of commercialisation capability building content (e-learning, workshops, seminars, guides) is developed, deployed, and continuously improved based on participant feedback and engagement data.
- Industry connection treks (domestic and international) are organised and delivered effectively, resulting in demonstrable new connections between researchers, industry, and investors.
- Strong, productive relationships are established and maintained with Deans, PVCs, researchers, partner universities, KiwiNet, KCA, and other key stakeholders.
- Programme deliverables, milestones, and reporting requirements are met on time and to the required standard.
- Researcher awareness of and engagement with the University's commercialisation pathways increases measurably over the contract period.
- Programme management is characterised by clear planning, transparent reporting, effective stakeholder communication, and continuous improvement.
- 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 doctoral qualification (PhD) in a relevant discipline (e.g., science, engineering, business, health, or technology).

Desirable

- Additional qualifications or professional development in commercialisation, entrepreneurship, innovation management, technology transfer, or business development.
- Qualifications or training in programme management, adult education, or curriculum design.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Significant experience (7+ years) in research commercialisation, technology transfer, incubation/acceleration programme management, or closely related roles within the research and innovation ecosystem.
- Demonstrated experience in designing, establishing, and managing incubation or acceleration programmes, ideally within a university or research institution context.
- Proven ability to develop and deliver capability building programmes, workshops, and educational content for diverse audiences including academic researchers and professional staff.
- Strong understanding of the full research commercialisation lifecycle — from invention disclosure and IP protection through to licensing, spin-out creation, and venture development.
- Experience commissioning, managing, and quality-assuring external providers and subject matter experts to deliver specialist programmes and content.
- Demonstrated ability to build and maintain productive relationships with senior stakeholders including academic leaders (Deans, PVCs), researchers, industry partners, and government agencies.
- Experience working within or closely with the New Zealand research commercialisation ecosystem, including familiarity with KiwiNet, and related networks and funding mechanisms.
- Excellent project and programme management skills with the ability to manage multiple concurrent initiatives, track milestones, and deliver to deadlines.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to present complex commercialisation concepts in accessible and engaging ways.
- Culturally competent with a genuine commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the ability to engage respectfully and effectively with Māori researchers and communities.

Desirable

- Personal experience as a researcher who has engaged in commercialisation activities (e.g., invention disclosure, spin-out involvement, industry-funded research).

- Experience with physical innovation spaces, maker spaces, or co-working environments and their role in supporting early-stage ventures.
- Familiarity with Knowledge Commercialisation Australasia (KCA) and the broader Australasian university commercialisation landscape.
- Experience designing or commissioning e-learning content and digital learning platforms.
- Networks within the New Zealand startup, venture capital, and innovation ecosystem.
- Experience organising international study tours, delegations, or industry connection programmes.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- A strategic thinker with the ability to translate high-level objectives into practical, well-executed programmes and initiatives.
- Entrepreneurial mindset: energised by building new things, comfortable with ambiguity, and able to operate effectively in an evolving environment.
- Consultative, culturally aware, and adaptable: able to engage effectively with a diverse range of stakeholders including academic researchers, senior university leaders, industry partners, government officials, and Māori and Pacific communities.
- A demonstrated commitment to innovation, continuous improvement, and challenging the status quo in how universities build commercialisation capability among their academic staff.
- Strong facilitation and interpersonal skills with the ability to inspire and motivate researchers to engage with commercialisation opportunities.
- Collaborative team player who develops positive working relationships across organisational boundaries, contributing to a high-performance culture within the Commercial & Business Partnerships team.
- Ability to manage multiple complex programmes and priorities simultaneously, maintaining progress and attention to detail under pressure.
- Deep commitment to equity, diversity principles, and the University's partnership with Māori as intended by Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

October 2026