

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager - New Zealand Graduate School of Medicine

Reports to: Director of Communications

Division: Communications

Tenure: 24 months

Location: Hamilton campus

Date: April 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 University of Waikato is establishing the New Zealand Graduate School of Medicine (NZGSM), New Zealand's first graduate-entry medical school. Opening in 2028, the NZGSM will introduce a proven international model of medical education designed to help address the chronic shortage of doctors in primary and community care in New Zealand.

The Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager will join the University's Communications team whose purpose is to protect and build the reputation of the University

amongst its diverse stakeholder groups. The team oversee all communication activities to support the NZGSM with its internal and external audiences. The position has a strong link to Te Wānanga Waiora - Division of Health, and will form close relationships with the divisional senior leadership team, the NZGSM Programme Manager and key workstream leads.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

The Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager is responsible for developing and leading a stakeholder communications and engagement plan for the NZGSM Establishment Programme. The role ensures the programme is understood, supported and consistently represented across key stakeholders groups and audiences.

This is a strategic delivery role working closely with the programme leadership to align messaging, support effective engagement and anticipate risks. It manages complex stakeholder environments, with key audiences including senior leaders, external delivery partners, funders, government representatives and agencies.

The role contributes to the University's strategic communications activities to support the NZGSM, working in partnership with the Director of Communications and the wider Communications team.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal: Director of Communications and wider Communications team
NZGSM Programme Manager and workstream leads
Te Wānanga Waiora - Division of Health Senior Leadership Team including:
Pro Vice-Chancellor Health
Dean of Medicine
Division Director
Iwi Partnerships Manager
Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Director of Fundraising
Marketing team
Events team

External: Relevant government organisations
Health sector partners
Agencies and contractors

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Stakeholder and Communications Leadership

- Develop and implement a stakeholder communication and engagement plan that supports the successful establishment of the programme and its transition into delivery.
- Provide strategic advice to programme leadership on stakeholder dynamics, the political landscape, reputational risks and engagement sequencing.
- Lead the development of clear, consistent and audience-focused communications including briefing materials, key messages, presentations, FAQs and reactive communications.
- Develop regular updates for identified key stakeholders.
- Support governance and leadership engagement by preparing communication and engagement updates and talking points.
- Develop and maintain a stakeholder matrix to support workstream leads with engagement opportunities, and support the coordination of engagement activity across the programme to avoid duplication, inconsistency or stakeholder fatigue.

- Partner with workstream leads, project managers, subject matter experts and external advisors to ensure communications are accurate, timely and aligned with programme objectives.

Reputation Management

- Monitor stakeholder sentiment and communication effectiveness, and adjust strategies in response to feedback, shifting risks or changes in the external environment.
- Support the External Communications Manager to respond to relevant media enquiries.
- Identify emerging issues, conflicting narratives or stakeholder resistance early, providing advice to programme leadership on response strategies.
- Adhere to agreed communication protocols with partner agencies.

Team Contribution

- Align with the Communications team on processes and practices.
- Work in partnership with the Internal Communications Manager and External Communications Manager to align on key news and announcements, developing communications plans where appropriate and ensuring messaging is consistent.
- Develop relationships within Te Wānanga Waiora - Division of Health, including participating in key divisional and leadership forums.
- Contribute to existing proactive content planning forums between the Communications and Marketing teams.

Health & Safety

- 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.
- Undertake line manager health and safety responsibilities as set out in the University's Health and Safety Policy.

Any other duties are required that are consistent with the position held, other than in exceptional circumstances such as rehabilitation after injury or sickness.

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

5. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager will be performing satisfactorily when:

- The programme has an embedded stakeholder communication and engagement plan, that is connected up to central communications plans and approaches.
- Stakeholders receive timely, accurate and consistent information appropriate to their role, organisation and level of interest.
- Political and reputational sensitivities are anticipated and managed early.
- The project team operates with a shared understanding of programme priorities, key decisions and agreed messages.
- The programme team and senior leaders are well supported to engage confidently with stakeholders and governance forums.
- Stakeholder risks, resistance points and communications issues are surfaced early and managed effectively.
- Strong relationships exist within the functional relationships identified and the role is embedded in both the central Communications team and Te Wānanga Waiora – Division of Health.
- 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

- Undergraduate qualification in a relevant field.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE

Essential

- At least ten years' experience in a full-time senior level communications and stakeholder management role within complex programmes, transformation initiatives or public-facing projects.
- Experience leading communication and engagement work programmes for projects that are nationally significant.
- Experience supporting internal alignment across multi-disciplinary project teams.
- Demonstrated ability to work effectively in environments with competing interests, political sensitivity and high public interest.
- Experience developing stakeholder strategies and communication plans that support programme outcomes.
- Strong judgement in handling confidential and sensitive issues.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to maintain message discipline, prepare high-quality executive briefings and translate complex material into clear messages for different audiences.
- Outstanding networking, influencing and relationship building skills.
- Comfort operating in ambiguity, with the ability to prioritise, anticipate risks and respond quickly as programme needs evolve.
- Commitment to equal opportunity and to the University's partnership with Māori as intended by the Treaty of Waitangi. Demonstrated awareness of Māori and Pacific cultures.
- Current full driver's license.

Preferred

- Proven experience in a related sector (e.g. public sector, health, education).
- Broad knowledge of issues facing the tertiary sector.
- Knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori or a willingness to learn.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Strategic and politically astute.
- Calm under pressure and credible with senior stakeholders.
- Collaborative, pragmatic, organised and delivery focused.
- Strong situational judgement with confidence to challenge concepts or assumptions.
- Professionalism, tact, discretion and respect for confidentiality.
- Ability to engage, present and communicate with all levels of staff and key stakeholders.
- Commitment to quality, despite competing demands on time.
- Ability to navigate operational and strategic work on a daily basis.
- Self-directed with a flexible attitude to work tasks and environment.
- Commitment to a culture of openness, flexibility, and co-operation.