

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Head of Commercial Partnerships – ICDR

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

As part of its Strategy, the University of Waikato is seeking to significantly grow and diversify its research profile through increased commercial engagement, deeper industry relevance, and scaled external funding. Central to this ambition is the newly established Institute for Chronic Disease Research (ICDR) — the first research institute in New Zealand (and globally) to focus on the combined and intersecting aspects that drive chronic disease. With chronic health conditions

representing approximately 10% of GDP in economic burden, and the research funding landscape shifting to prioritise health, the ICDR represents a timely and strategic investment.

The ICDR operates through a unique interwoven matrix of Research Pillars (Respiratory Disease, Cancer, Heart Disease, Diabetes, Arthritis) and Research Platforms (Clinical Research & Trials, Preventive Health, Mental Health & Wellbeing, AI & Technology, Māori & Pacific Health, Health Systems, Infrastructure & Workforce Development). This structure supports transdisciplinary research that examines the complexities of co-morbidities and intersecting chronic disease. The ICDR is strategically aligned with the NZ Graduate School of Medicine (NZGSM) and the University's HIKO Hub innovation precinct, providing multiple pathways for commercial partnerships and industry engagement.

The health and life sciences sector — including pharmaceuticals, medical devices, biotechnology, digital health, and clinical research organisations — represents a priority growth area for the University's commercial research strategy. The ICDR's research strengths, combined with global alliances for chronic disease and emerging opportunities in health AI and medtech innovation, create significant potential for high-value, long-term industry partnerships both domestically and internationally.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

- Act as the commercial interface between the Institute for Chronic Disease Research (ICDR) and industry partners across the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device, digital health, and clinical research sectors — both domestically and internationally.
- Develop and deliver a commercial revenue plan for the ICDR, driving sustainable income growth through industry-funded research, clinical trial partnerships, licensing revenue, co-funded programmes, and philanthropic/grant co-funding.
- Build and transition industry relationships from initial engagements to enduring, multi-faceted strategic partnerships that span collaborative research, co-innovation, clinical trials, IP commercialisation, and talent development.
- Facilitate seamless connections between industry partners and ICDR researchers across all Research Pillars (Respiratory Disease, Cancer, Heart Disease, Diabetes, Arthritis) and Platforms (Clinical Research & Trials, AI & Technology, Preventive Health, Māori & Pacific Health), working closely with the ICDR Director.
- Contribute to the University's broader commercial ecosystem, including the HIKO Hub innovation precinct, by anchoring health and life sciences partners within the University's engagement framework and identifying cross-disciplinary commercial opportunities.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal:

- Director Commercial & Business Partnerships
- ICDR Director (dotted-line reporting relationship)
- Commercial & Business Partnerships team (BDMs, IP & Licensing)
- ICDR Research Pillar and Platform Leads
- Associate Deans Research (particularly Health, Science, Māori & Pacific)
- NZ Graduate School of Medicine (NZGSM) leadership
- Academic and clinical research staff across ICDR pillars
- HIKO Hub operational team
- Marketing, Communications, and Events teams
- Finance, Legal, and Research Office teams

External:

- Pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical device companies (C-suite, R&D, and commercial leadership)
- Clinical Research Organisations (CROs) and contract research partners
- Māori and Pacific health organisations, Iwi health providers, and Trusts
- International research institutes, global chronic disease alliances, and university partners
- Health-sector funders including HRC, MBIE, philanthropic foundations, and venture capital firms

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**Industry Partnership Development & Commercial Strategy**

- Develop and manage a portfolio of strategic industry partnerships across pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device, digital health, and clinical research sectors, serving as the ICDR's primary commercial point of contact and trusted advisor.
- Design and execute a comprehensive ICDR commercial partnership strategy that aligns industry partner goals with the Institute's Research Pillars (Respiratory Disease, Cancer, Heart Disease, Diabetes, Arthritis) and Platforms (Clinical Research & Trials, AI & Technology, Preventive Health, Māori & Pacific Health).
- Build and maintain deep, trust-based relationships at executive and senior leadership levels (VP R&D, Chief Medical Officers, Heads of Innovation, Commercial Directors) within partner organisations, demonstrating technical credibility across chronic disease research domains and understanding partners' strategic priorities and innovation pipelines.
- Proactively identify and shape opportunities for industry-funded research programmes, clinical trial partnerships, co-funded PhD scholarships, joint grant applications, and IP licensing and commercialisation arrangements across all ICDR research areas.
- Lead the negotiation and development of complex partnership agreements in collaboration with the wider Commercial & Business Partnerships team, ensuring alignment with commercial and academic objectives while addressing IP considerations, clinical trial protocols, regulatory requirements, and data-sharing arrangements.
- Coordinate cross-functional delivery involving ICDR researchers, clinical staff, and platform leads to ensure partnership projects are delivered on time, to budget, and to the highest quality standards.
- Monitor partnership health through regular reviews, identifying opportunities to expand single-project engagements into multi-year, multi-pillar platform partnerships.

Commercial Revenue Growth & Funding Development

- Drive the achievement of commercial revenue targets for the ICDR, developing and delivering an annual commercial revenue plan covering industry-funded research, clinical trial income, licensing revenue, co-funded programmes, and philanthropic/grant co-funding.
- Maintain a robust pipeline of commercial opportunities across ICDR's Research Pillars and Platforms, ensuring visibility and accurate forecasting via the University's CRM system.
- Identify and pursue opportunities to broaden partnerships from single research projects to multi-year programmes spanning collaborative R&D, clinical trials, health AI and digital health innovation, medtech development, and preventive health initiatives.

- Collaborate with the wider Commercial & Business Partnerships team to identify cross-disciplinary opportunities where ICDR capabilities intersect with other University research strengths (e.g., AI, engineering, data science, environmental health).
- Support ICDR academic and clinical research staff in the development of commercial proposals, technical scoping, pricing models, and value propositions that resonate with pharmaceutical, biotech, and medtech partners.
- Work in collaboration with the Commercial & Business Partnerships team to ensure commercial arrangements capture appropriate value for University IP, licensing, research expertise, clinical trial infrastructure, and overheads.

Stakeholder Engagement & International Relationship Management

- Facilitate meaningful connections between international and domestic industry partners and ICDR researchers, translating industry R&D challenges (e.g., drug development, clinical validation, digital therapeutics, diagnostic innovation) into collaborative research opportunities.
- Coordinate engagement across ICDR's Research Pillars and Platforms, the NZ Graduate School of Medicine, and relevant University Schools to present a unified interface to partners, showcasing the breadth and depth of chronic disease research capabilities.
- Actively develop and manage international partnerships aligned with the ICDR's Global Alliances for Chronic Disease strategy, building relationships with overseas research institutes, pharma/biotech companies, and health innovation ecosystems.
- Organise and host high-value partner visits, research showcases, clinical site tours, and innovation workshops that demonstrate ICDR capabilities across its five disease pillars and six research platforms.
- Work with Marketing to develop case studies and success stories featuring ICDR partnerships that elevate the University's international reputation as a leader in chronic disease research and commercialisation.
- Champion culturally grounded engagement with Māori and Pacific health organisations, Iwi health providers, and communities — ensuring commercial partnerships align with health equity principles and the ICDR's Māori & Pacific Health platform.

Strategic Planning & Reporting

- Develop annual commercial strategies for the ICDR that contribute to the Division's overall commercial targets, the University's Research Plan, and the ICDR's strategic objectives.
- Track and report on key partnership metrics, including commercial revenue, pipeline velocity, partner satisfaction, clinical trial engagement, and research impact.
- Provide regular, data-driven reporting to the Director Commercial & Business Partnerships and the ICDR Director regarding portfolio performance, risks, and strategic opportunities.
- Contribute market intelligence, global health sector trends, and partner feedback to inform the development of new ICDR commercial offerings and research priorities.
- Assist in documenting the impact of ICDR research partnerships for internal, government, and international reporting requirements.

Team Contribution & Continuous Improvement

- Work effectively as a senior member of the wider Commercial & Business Partnerships team and DVCR Office, providing strategic input and supporting colleagues across portfolios.
- Work collaboratively with the ICDR Director and research leadership to ensure commercial activities are aligned with academic and clinical research priorities.
- Share knowledge, insights, and best practice from international pharma/biotech/medtech sectors to strengthen the team's overall commercial 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 commercial processes, CRM systems, partnership frameworks, contract templates, and engagement models — with particular focus on health sector and clinical trial partnership best practice.

5. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Head of Commercial Partnerships – ICDR will be performing satisfactorily when:

- A comprehensive ICDR commercial partnership strategy is developed, actively managed, and delivering measurable results
- Commercial revenue targets for the ICDR are achieved or exceeded across industry-funded research, clinical trials, licensing, and co-funded programmes
- A strong portfolio of domestic and international industry partnerships is established across pharmaceutical, biotech, medical device, and digital health sectors with evidence of renewals and deepening engagement
- New partnership opportunities are consistently identified and progressed across all ICDR Research Pillars and Platforms
- CRM data is accurate, timely, and provides comprehensive pipeline visibility for ICDR commercial activities
- Effective working relationships are maintained with the ICDR Director, research leaders, and the wider Commercial & Business Partnerships team
- Commercial activities comply with University policies, regulatory requirements, and support the University's strategic objectives and ICDR goals
- 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 Bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline (e.g., Life Sciences, Biomedical Science, Health Sciences, Commerce/Business, or a related field).

Desirable

- A postgraduate qualification (Master's, MBA, or PhD) in a health, life sciences, or business-related discipline.
- Professional certification or training in business development, commercial management, or strategic partnerships.
- Additional qualifications in health economics, clinical research, or regulatory affairs.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Minimum of 5-10 years in commercial partnerships, business development, or strategic account management within the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device, or clinical research sectors.
- Proven track record of building and managing high-value industry partnerships and achieving commercial revenue targets in a health or life sciences environment.
- Demonstrated international experience in commercial or business development roles, with the ability to navigate global health industry ecosystems, regulatory environments, and cross-cultural business relationships.
- Excellent stakeholder engagement skills with ability to build rapport at senior levels (VP R&D, Chief Medical Officers, Heads of Innovation, Commercial Directors) within pharma, biotech, and medtech organisations, as well as with academic researchers and clinical leaders.
- Strong commercial acumen including partnership structuring, proposal development, pricing models for research services and clinical trials, contract negotiation, and the ability to close complex multi-party agreements involving IP and licensing.
- Understanding of research commercialisation, IP strategy, technology transfer, and industry-university partnerships in health and life sciences domains — with the ability to work collaboratively with the wider Commercial & Business Partnerships team on IP and licensing matters.
- Superior written and verbal communication skills to translate complex health research concepts into compelling commercial value propositions for diverse audiences.
- Proficiency in CRM systems and Microsoft Office suite; familiarity with clinical trial management systems or health research platforms is advantageous.
- Ability to work autonomously as a senior individual contributor while collaborating effectively across a matrix reporting structure (solid line to Director Commercial & Business Partnerships; dotted line to ICDR Director).
- Commitment to health equity and to the University's partnership with Māori as intended by the Treaty of Waitangi. Demonstrated cultural competency and awareness of Māori and Pacific health priorities.
- Current full driver's license. Willingness and ability to undertake international travel as required.

Preferred

- Experience working within or alongside a university, research institute, or Crown Research Institute (CRI) in a commercial or partnerships capacity.
- Knowledge of the NZ health research funding system (HRC, MBIE) and international health research funding mechanisms.
- Established networks in the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device, or clinical research sectors — domestically and/or internationally.
- Direct experience with clinical trial partnerships, CRO engagement, or pharmaceutical/biotech R&D collaboration.
- Experience engaging with Māori and Pacific health organisations, Iwi health providers, or community health networks.
- Understanding of IP rights, patents, licensing, and technology transfer processes in health and life sciences, including regulatory pathways (e.g., Medsafe, FDA, TGA).
- Familiarity with emerging trends in digital health, health AI, precision medicine, and medtech innovation relevant to chronic disease research.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Strategic and commercially minded thinker with the ability to align activities with long-term institutional goals and see the big picture across a complex health research landscape.
- Results-oriented and entrepreneurial with a proactive mindset and a track record of driving commercial outcomes in complex environments.
- Consultative, culturally aware, and adaptable — able to engage effectively with a diverse range of stakeholders including academic researchers, clinicians, C-suite industry executives, Māori and Pacific health leaders, and international partners.
- A demonstrated commitment to innovation, continuous improvement, and challenging the status quo in how universities engage commercially with the health sector.
- Strong analytical ability with the capacity to interpret health sector trends, market data, and research outputs to inform commercial strategy.
- Collaborative team player who develops positive working relationships across matrix structures, contributing to a high-performance culture within the Commercial & Business Partnerships team and the ICDR.
- Ability to manage multiple complex partnerships and priorities simultaneously, maintaining progress and attention to detail under pressure.
- Deep commitment to health equity, diversity principles, and the University's partnership with Māori as intended by the Treaty of Waitangi.

August 2026