The University of Waikato
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Key Account Manager – Research Partnerships (1.0 FTE)

Reports to:	Director Commercial & Business Partnerships
Division:	DVCR Research Office – Commercial & Business Partnerships
Tenure:	Permanent
Location:	Hamilton/ Tauranga
Date:	February 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. The University has set an ambitious target to grow industry-derived research over the next five years. This transformation requires a shift from transactional projects to long-term, multi-year strategic partnerships.

Central to this strategy is the HIKO Hub, the University's dedicated innovation precinct and "commercial front door." HIKO serves as the primary gateway for industry, investors, and community partners to access the University's research expertise, facilities, and talent. The Commercial & Business Partnerships team is responsible for activating this ecosystem and driving commercial outcomes.

Engineering and Computer Science represent priority growth sectors for the University's commercial research strategy. These disciplines are critical to New Zealand's economic transformation, with significant industry demand spanning advanced manufacturing, robotics and automation, artificial intelligence and machine learning, software development, cybersecurity, digital technologies, infrastructure engineering, and Industry 4.0 applications. The University of Waikato has internationally recognized research strengths in these areas and world-class facilities that enable deep industry collaboration.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

- Act as the primary strategic interface between high-value industry partners in engineering, technology, and digital sectors and the University's Engineering and Computer Science research capabilities.
- Drive sustainable commercial revenue growth by identifying, shaping, and closing research and service opportunities aligned with industry needs in advanced manufacturing, robotics, AI/ML, software development, digital technologies, cybersecurity, and infrastructure engineering.
- Transition relationships from ad-hoc engagements to enduring, multi-faceted partnerships that span research, co-innovation, talent pipelines, and shared infrastructure access.
- Facilitate seamless connections between industry technical challenges and University research expertise in Engineering and Computer Science, working across relevant Schools, Institutes, and Research Centres.
- Contribute to the vibrancy of the HIKO Hub ecosystem by anchoring engineering and technology partners within the innovation precinct, particularly through HIKO Labs co-location opportunities.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal:

- Director Commercial & Business Partnerships
- Research Office team
- Business Development Managers (BDMs)
- Directors of Research Institutes and Centres
- Associate Deans Research
- Pro-Vice Chancellors and Heads of Schools
- Academic and research staff
- HIKO Hub operational team
- Marketing, Communications, and Events teams
- Finance and Legal teams

External:

- Strategic Industry and Commercial Partners (C-suite and senior management)
- Māori organisations, Iwi, and Trusts

- Economic Development Agencies, Business Chambers and City Councils
- International research and commercial partners
- Investors, Venture Capital firms, and Angel networks

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Key Account Management & Partnership Development

- Manage a defined portfolio of 10-15 strategic commercial partners (Key Accounts) in the engineering, technology, and digital sectors, serving as their primary point of contact and trusted advisor within the University.
- Develop and execute comprehensive multi-year account plans that align partner strategic goals with University research capabilities in Engineering and Computer Science, including AI/ML, robotics, advanced manufacturing, software engineering, cybersecurity, and digital transformation.
- Build and maintain deep, trust-based relationships at executive and operational levels (CTO, VP Engineering, R&D Directors) within partner organisations, speaking their technical language and understanding their innovation challenge.
- Proactively identify and shape opportunities for contract research, consultancy services, co-funded PhD scholarships in engineering and computer science disciplines, industry-funded research projects, and engineering/IT student talent pipelines.
- Lead the negotiation and development of partnership agreements, ensuring alignment with commercial and academic objectives while addressing technical specifications, IP considerations, and data/software licensing requirements.
- Coordinate cross-functional delivery teams involving engineering and computer science academics, technical staff, and students to ensure projects are delivered on time, to budget, and to high quality standards.
- Monitor partnership health, conducting regular reviews to ensure satisfaction and identify areas for growth or improvement, particularly opportunities to expand from single projects to platform partnerships.

Commercial Revenue Growth

- Drive the achievement of specific commercial revenue targets associated with the assigned Engineering and Computer Science Key Account portfolio, contributing to the goal of growing industry-derived research income.
- Maintain a robust pipeline of commercial opportunities in priority sectors (advanced manufacturing, robotics, AI/ML, software, digital technologies), ensuring visibility and accurate forecasting via the University's CRM system.
- Identify and pursue upsell and cross-sell opportunities, broadening the scope of engagement from single engineering projects to multi-year programs that may span hardware/software co-development, applied research, testing facilities access, and student co-ops.
- Collaborate with other Business Development teams to translate broader market strategies into specific opportunities within key accounts, and identify cross-disciplinary opportunities where engineering/CS capabilities intersect with other domains.
- Support engineering and computer science academic staff in the development of commercial proposals, technical scoping, pricing models, and value propositions that resonate with industry partners.
- Ensure commercial arrangements capture appropriate value for University IP, software licensing, technical expertise, facilities access, and overheads, particularly for technology transfer and software development projects.

Stakeholder Engagement & Relationship Management

- Facilitate meaningful connections between industry partners and University engineering and computer science researchers, translating industry technical challenges (e.g., automation needs, AI implementation, software architecture, digital transformation) into applied research opportunities.
- Coordinate engagement across relevant Schools (Engineering, Computing & Mathematical Sciences), Research Institutes, and specialist labs to present a unified "One University" interface to partners, showcasing the breadth of technical capabilities available.
- Actively support partner participation in HIKO Hub activities, particularly encouraging co-location in HIKO Labs where engineering and technology companies can access specialist equipment, work alongside students and researchers, and accelerate prototyping and product development.
- Organise and host high-value partner visits, technical showcases, lab tours, and innovation workshops that demonstrate University capabilities in robotics, AI/ML, advanced manufacturing, software engineering, and digital technologies.
- Work with Marketing to develop case studies and success stories featuring engineering and computer science partnerships that elevate the University's reputation as a preferred research and innovation partner for New Zealand's technology and manufacturing sectors.
- Support and facilitate pathways for partnership with Māori organisations and technology enterprises, ensuring engagement is culturally appropriate and aligned with University values, particularly in digital inclusion and technology access initiatives.

Strategic Planning & Reporting

- Develop annual account strategies that contribute to the Division's overall commercial targets and the University's Research Plan.
- Track and report on key partnership metrics, including revenue, pipeline velocity, partner satisfaction, and impact.
- Provide regular, data-driven reporting to the Director regarding portfolio performance, risks, and strategic opportunities.
- Contribute market intelligence and partner feedback to inform the development of new commercial offerings and research priorities.
- Assist in documenting the impact of research partnerships for internal and external reporting requirements.

Team Contribution

- Work effectively as a member of the wider Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (DVCR) Office to support other team members and provide support and/or coverage of functions.
- Work collaboratively to encourage transparency across activities, open sharing of knowledge, and the building of positive relationships to support a high-performance culture.
- Work with other team members on projects.
- Support a positive culture and morale.
- Comply with and undertake responsibilities set out in the University’s Health and Safety Policy

Continuous Improvement

- Actively contribute to the ongoing development and improvement of commercial processes, CRM systems, contract templates and engagement models.

5. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Key Account Manager Research Partnerships will be performing satisfactorily when:

- Portfolio of key accounts is actively managed with up-to-date account plans
- Commercial revenue targets achieved or exceeded
- Partner satisfaction is high with evidence of renewals and positive feedback
- New partnership opportunities consistently identified and progressed
- CRM data is accurate, timely, and comprehensive
- Valuable contribution and participation in relevant meetings and/or projects is provided.
- 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 Bachelor's degree in Engineering, Computer Science, Software Engineering, or a closely related technical discipline.

Desirable

- A postgraduate qualification (Master's or PhD) in Engineering, Computer Science, or related field.
- Professional certification in sales, key account management, or business development.
- Additional business qualifications (MBA, business diploma) complementing technical background.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Minimum of 3-5 years in key account management, technical sales, business development, or partnership management within engineering, technology, software, or advanced manufacturing sectors.
- Proven track record of managing high-value B2B relationships with engineering, technology, or manufacturing companies and achieving commercial revenue targets.
- Demonstrated technical credibility with direct experience in engineering, software development, technology implementation, or applied research. Ability to understand and discuss technical specifications, engineering challenges, and technology roadmaps.
- Excellent stakeholder engagement skills with ability to build rapport with CTOs, Engineering Directors, R&D Managers, technical experts, and academic researchers.
- Strong commercial acumen including technical proposal development, project scoping, pricing models for R&D services, contract negotiation, and closing complex deals involving IP and technology licensing.
- Understanding of research commercialisation, technology transfer, and industry-university partnerships in engineering and computer science domains.
- Superior written and verbal communication skills to translate complex technical concepts into commercial value propositions.
- Proficiency in CRM systems and Microsoft Office suite, plus familiarity with technical collaboration tools.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- 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

- Experience in tertiary education sector, Crown Research Institute (CRI), or technology/research consultancy.
- Knowledge of NZ science and innovation funding system.
- Established networks in engineering and technology sectors (advanced manufacturing, robotics, AI/ML, software, digital technologies, cybersecurity, infrastructure engineering).

- Direct experience or relationships with major NZ technology/manufacturing companies
- Experience with Māori organisations, Iwi, or Māori technology/business networks.
- Strong understanding of IP rights, patents, and technology transfer processes for engineering/software innovations.
- Familiarity with Industry 4.0 concepts, digital transformation challenges, and emerging technology trends relevant to NZ industry.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Strategic thinker able to align activities with long-term goals and see the big picture.
- Results-oriented and entrepreneurial with a proactive mindset.
- Consultative, inclusive and adaptable to successfully engage with a diverse range of stakeholders and at all levels of the organisation.
- A demonstrated commitment to challenge the status-quo and drive continuous improvements.
- Strong technical ability with systems and processes
- Collaborative team player that develops positive working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders/users
- Ability to monitor multiple tasks, prioritise and maintain progress.
- Commitment to diversity principles and the University's partnership with Māori as intended by the Treaty of Waitangi.

February 2026