

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Payroll Manager

Reports to:	Director People and Capability (or delegate)
Division:	People and Capability
Tenure:	Permanent
Location:	Hamilton
Date:	July 2026

Vision

We will

- Deliver a world-class education and research portfolio
- Provide a full and dynamic university experience which is distinctive in character
- Pursue strong international linkages to advance knowledge

The over-arching themes of this *Vision* are:

- Excellence
- Distinctiveness
- International Connectedness

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

Our motto Ko te Tangata (For the People) is at the heart of everything we do. It is our people who make this University distinctive, and the People and Capability team support all staff and managers to create a positive environment that enables our people to be successful.

Our team deliver core services relating to Talent Acquisition and Recruitment, Human Resources, Organisational Development, Payroll, Safety and Wellness, and Employment Relations.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

The Payroll Manager leads the end-to-end payroll function and payroll team to ensure University staff are paid accurately, on time, and in accordance with legislation, employment agreements, University policy and sound payroll controls.

The role is accountable for day-to-day payroll operations, operational risk management, audit and compliance readiness, payroll systems and reporting, continuous improvement, and the development of a capable, resilient and well-led payroll team.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal

- Payroll team
- P&C leadership team
- HR Administration
- HR Business Partners
- Finance
- ITS
- managers and staff throughout the University
- internal audit/risk stakeholders as required

External

- Inland Revenue Department
- ACC
- WorkAon
- medical insurance companies
- superannuation scheme providers
- Work and Income
- payroll system vendors and implementation partners
- external auditors and advisers
- payroll user groups

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Planning and functional leadership

- Lead the payroll function with clear priorities, work plans, controls, reporting, service expectations and improvement roadmaps.
- Translate payroll risks, system issues and compliance requirements into practical work programmes, timeframes and deliverables.
- Contribute to People and Capability planning, workforce planning, risk management and service improvement.

Team leadership, capability and culture

- Lead, manage and develop the payroll team.
- Set clear expectations, allocate work, monitor workload, provide coaching and feedback, hold regular team meetings and one-to-ones, and ensure new and temporary staff are appropriately inducted and trained.
- Build a constructive, respectful, collaborative and accountable team culture.

Payroll operations and service delivery

- Manage day-to-day payroll operations, including payrun workflow, processing oversight, checking, reporting, issue resolution, query management, advice, escalation and service quality.
- Maintain practical line of sight over incoming work, deadlines, pressure points, risks and team capacity.
- Be sufficiently hands-on and technically competent to support the team and step into appropriate parts of the payroll process when required while maintaining proper controls and separation of duties.

Controls, compliance and risk management

- Ensure payroll processes comply with relevant legislation, employment agreements, University policies, delegations and payroll controls.
- Maintain effective documentation, audit trails, checking, approvals, reconciliations, access controls and compensating controls where full separation of duties is not practical.
- Identify, document, escalate and resolve payroll risks and control weaknesses.

Business improvement and continuous improvement

- Lead practical improvements to payroll workflow, documentation, automation, system use, reporting, controls, self-service and customer experience.
- Identify root causes of rework, overtime, errors or delays and implement sustainable solutions.
- Track improvement actions through to completion and evidence benefits such as reduced risk, reduced manual work, improved resilience and/or improved service quality.

Payroll technology, reporting and data

- Work in partnership with ITS, Finance and vendors to manage payroll system configuration, integrations, upgrades, patches, testing, issue resolution and enhancements.
- Lead or contribute to payroll reporting, analytics, data quality, exception reporting and self-service content. Ensure payroll system changes are tested, documented, controlled and communicated.

Audit, external agencies and stakeholder management

- Oversee and facilitate internal and external payroll audits, reviews, statutory reporting and external agency requirements.
- Ensure actions arising from audits, reviews or external requests are owned, tracked and completed in a timely way.
- Build effective working relationships with Finance, ITS, P&C teams, managers, staff, vendors and external agencies.

Health, safety and wellbeing

- Manage payroll workload, overtime, deadlines and team pressures in a way that supports safe and sustainable work.
- Identify workload or wellbeing risks early, escalate with options, and implement practical mitigations. Participate in the maintenance of a safe and healthy work environment for self and others.
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General

- Comply with University policies, procedures, relevant work standards and statutory obligations. Undertake other duties 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. New staff normally attend such a meeting approximately three months after taking up their appointment.

5. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Payroll Manager role will be performing satisfactorily when:

- Staff are paid accurately, on time and in accordance with legislation, employment agreements, University policy and payroll controls.
- The Payroll Manager maintains effective operational engagement with payroll workflow, incoming work, deadlines, risks, exceptions, team capacity and cover arrangements.
- Payroll work is appropriately allocated, monitored, checked, approved, reconciled and documented, with effective separation of duties or compensating controls in place.
- Payroll data, correspondence, records, reports, journals, tax payments, suspense accounts, manual adjustments and external returns are accurate, complete and completed within required timeframes.
- Payroll queries, issues and escalations are responded to accurately, professionally, constructively and in a timely way.
- The payroll team is well led, with regular team communication, one-to-ones, coaching, training, work allocation, follow-up and knowledge sharing.
- New and temporary staff are inducted and trained with clear expectations, supervision and documented processes.
- Payroll risks, audit findings, control gaps, system issues and compliance actions are documented, prioritised, escalated where required and progressed to resolution.
- Process, system, reporting or documentation improvements are delivered and embedded, with benefits evidenced where possible.
- Overtime and workload pressures are actively monitored, analysed and managed, with practical actions taken to reduce avoidable overtime and improve resilience.
- Effective working relationships are maintained with Finance, ITS, P&C teams, managers, staff, vendors and external agencies.
- Safe and healthy work practices are followed, and workload/well-being risks are identified and managed.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Essential

- A tertiary qualification in accounting, business, payroll, HR information systems or a related discipline, or equivalent relevant experience.

TRAINING, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Essential

- Significant experience leading a payroll function and payroll team in a large, complex organisation.
- Demonstrated hands-on payroll expertise, including practical understanding of end-to-end payroll processes, checking, reconciliations, statutory obligations and payroll controls.
- Comprehensive knowledge of New Zealand payroll-related employment legislation, including the Holidays Act, taxation, ACC, KiwiSaver/superannuation and relevant employment agreement requirements.
- Experience leading payroll process improvement, automation, documentation, reporting, controls, risk reduction and service improvement.
- Experience with payroll systems, system testing, configuration/change control, vendor engagement, integrations and issue resolution.
- Strong analytical, numerical, problem-solving and judgement skills, with the ability to identify root causes and develop practical solutions.
- Proven people leadership capability, including setting expectations, coaching, training, managing workload, addressing issues and building team capability.
- Excellent planning, prioritisation and time management skills, with the ability to manage strict payroll deadlines and competing demands.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to explain payroll matters clearly and professionally to technical and non-technical audiences.
- Ability to build trusted working relationships with Finance, ITS, P&C teams, managers, staff, vendors and external agencies.
- Medium to advanced Excel capability and confidence using reporting, data and workflow tools.

Preferred

- Knowledge of Ascender payroll software and Oracle HCM.
- Knowledge of Power BI, SQL or other reporting/analytics tools.
- Experience leading payroll system upgrades, remediation, audit actions or transformation projects.
- Membership of a relevant payroll, accounting or HR professional body.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- High integrity, sound judgement and commitment to confidentiality.
- Constructive, respectful and professional communication style.
- Practical, solutions-focused and improvement-oriented approach.
- Accountable, proactive and comfortable taking ownership in complex environments.
- Resilient and able to maintain performance under pressure and strict deadlines.

- Able to support others, address issues constructively and contribute to a positive team culture.
- Commitment to openness, flexibility, cooperation and continuous improvement.
- Commitment to equal opportunity and to the University's partnership with Māori as intended by Te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi.