

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Counsellor - Interpersonal Violence Specialty

Reports to: Clinical Manager, Mental Health & Wellbeing

Division: Student Health Service

Tenure: Continuing

Location: Hamilton

Date: June 2026

Vision

Ko te tangata

A research-intensive university providing a globally connected, innovative and inclusive student 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

Student Services provides high quality integrated services that foster engagement, promote wellbeing and support students in achieving their academic goals. The work of Student Services comprises the following student services: administrative processes from enrolment through to graduation, enquiry management, pastoral care, international student services, health, accommodation, counselling, disabilities support, career development services, sport and wellbeing, student surveys and student complaints and appeals.

The Director of Student Services is responsible for the overall management of Student Services, with assistance from a team of Associate Directors including the Associate Director Student

Health.

The Student Health Service provides high quality, accessible health care, counselling services and disability support to the University of Waikato students and enhances the educational process by modifying or removing health-related barriers to personal development and learning.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

The Counsellor - Interpersonal Violence provides specialist clinical support to students who have experienced, witnessed, or been affected by interpersonal violence, including sexual harm, family or relationship violence, harassment, and other forms of coercive or abusive behaviour. The role delivers trauma-informed, evidence-based counselling and crisis intervention, ensuring students receive safe, confidential, and culturally responsive care. Working as part of the Student Health Service, the counsellor contributes to a coordinated, student-centred response that prioritises wellbeing, safety, and empowerment.

In addition to direct clinical work, the position provides professional guidance and consultation to both clinical and non-clinical staff across the University on matters relating to interpersonal violence. This includes supporting staff to recognise signs of harm, respond safely and appropriately, understand referral pathways, and uphold best-practice standards in trauma-informed care. The counsellor acts as a key resource for teams seeking advice on complex situations, risk assessment, or student support planning.

A component of the role is contributing to the University's strategic approach to violence prevention. The counsellor works collaboratively with the Violence Prevention Health Promoter to shape the content, direction, and quality of prevention initiatives, campaigns, and educational activities. This includes providing clinical insight, ensuring messaging is safe and appropriate, and helping to align prevention activities with emerging trends, student needs, and national best practice. The counsellor may also participate in the development and review of policies, protocols, and training that strengthen the University's overall response to interpersonal violence.

Through these combined responsibilities, the Counsellor - Interpersonal Violence plays a vital role in fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive campus environment. The position contributes to early intervention, prevention, and continuous improvement efforts, ensuring that students and staff are supported by a cohesive, informed, and compassionate system of care.

The Counsellor - Interpersonal Violence will also support the other counsellors in the Mental Health & Wellbeing team to provide professional counselling services for students as a member of the Student Health Service (SHS) interdisciplinary team:

- Provide therapeutic services to improve students' ability to succeed in their academic and personal lives
- Positively contribute to the personal development and well-being of students engaging with the Mental Health & Wellbeing team
- Provide high quality, professional services in all interactions.
- Use pathways of care to ensure students access the services they need, both within Student Health Service and with relevant external services.

3. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal: Associate Director Student Health Service
Students
Student Health Service staff

Student Services staff
Other University staff and services

External: Parents/whānau/friends of students
Community agencies and organisations
Professional counselling supervisor or equivalent
Other primary care providers
Mental health providers
Health and social service providers
Community groups and agencies working in sexual violence response and family violence response
Waikato Students Union
Other Universities

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Counsellor – Interpersonal Violence

- Provide trauma-informed, evidence-based counselling and psychological support to students affected by interpersonal violence, including sexual harm, family or relationship violence, harassment, coercion, and related forms of abuse.
- Deliver crisis intervention, safety planning, and short-term therapeutic support, ensuring students receive safe, confidential, and culturally responsive care.
- Support coordination of care across agencies, including advocacy with internal and external services where appropriate and within scope.
- Conduct risk assessments and coordinate appropriate referrals to internal and external services, including specialist agencies, emergency services, and cultural support providers.

Consultation, Staff Support & Capacity Building

- Act as a specialist resource for clinical and non-clinical staff seeking guidance on responding to interpersonal violence, including risk assessment, trauma-informed approaches, holistic support responses, and referral pathways.
- Provide consultation on complex cases, supporting staff to respond safely, ethically, and within scope.
- Contribute to staff training, workshops, and capability-building activities related to interpersonal violence, trauma-informed practice, and safe response protocols.
- Support the development and refinement of University policies, procedures, and guidelines related to interpersonal and sexual violence.

Violence Prevention Strategy & Collaboration

- Work collaboratively with the Violence Prevention Health Promoter to shape the direction, content, and quality of violence-prevention initiatives and campaigns.
- Provide clinical insight to ensure prevention messaging is safe, appropriate, and aligned with best practice.
- Contribute to the development of prevention resources, educational materials, and campus-wide initiatives that promote respectful relationships and reduce harm.
- Monitor emerging trends, student needs, and sector developments to inform prevention priorities and service improvements.

General Counselling Responsibilities

- Provide short-term therapeutic counselling for students who seek assistance with personal difficulties.

- Provide interventions that are sensitive and appropriate to differing cultural values and diversity.
- Refer appropriately, when students present with issues that are long-term, out-of-scope of counselling or require specialist community-based responses.
- Develop and maintain networks of community and mental health support services.
- Be familiar with and participate in the University's Special Considerations process as required
- Participate in the development and delivery of the SHS self-help workshop/therapeutic group programme.
- Provide students with appropriate self-help references and resources aligned to Counselling.
- Participate, as required, in critical incident management such as post-vention support.
- Collaborate with the Halls of Residences on staff training programmes as required.
- Participate in SHS Interdisciplinary care planning for students with complex needs.
- Complete accurate client notes and other required data in the Practice Management System (PMS).
- Maintain up to date knowledge of changes and developments counselling.
- Participate in regular professional supervision with an appropriately qualified and approved supervisor.
- Assist in the supervision, guidance and support of Student Counsellors on placement.
- Positively contribute to regular team meetings.
- Ensure the counsellor adheres to the Code of Ethics of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) or equivalent body and that concerns/conflicts are immediately raised with the Clinical Manager
- Participate in the maintenance of a safe and healthy work environment for self and others
- Comply with and undertake responsibilities set out in the University's Health and Safety Policy.
- Any other duties as required that are consistent with the position held, other than in exceptional circumstances such as rehabilitation after injury or sickness.

Partnerships, Networks & System Improvement

- Build and maintain effective relationships with internal stakeholders (e.g., Student Services, Security, Accommodation, Equity teams) to support coordinated responses to interpersonal violence.
- Liaise with external agencies, including specialist violence-prevention and survivor-support organisations, to ensure seamless referral pathways and collaborative care.
- Participate in service evaluation, quality improvement, and data-informed planning to strengthen the University's response to interpersonal violence.

Professional Practice & Team Contribution

- Maintain professional registration, ethical standards, and ongoing professional development relevant to interpersonal violence and trauma-informed practice.
- Contribute positively to the Student Health Service team culture, supporting colleagues and participating in cross-service initiatives.
- Uphold confidentiality, cultural safety, and student-centred practice in all interactions.

Team Contribution

- Work effectively as a member of the Student Health Service 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 Student Health Service systems and processes.

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

5. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Counsellor - Interpersonal Violence will be performing satisfactorily when:

Counsellor – Interpersonal Violence

- Students receive timely, trauma-informed, culturally safe therapeutic support.
- Students receive timely, trauma-informed, culturally safe counselling and crisis support.
- Risk assessments are completed accurately, with appropriate safety planning and referrals.
- Clinical documentation is accurate, comprehensive, and completed within required timeframes.

Staff Support & Consultation

- Staff report increased confidence and clarity when responding to interpersonal violence.
- Advice provided is consistent with best practice, trauma-informed principles, and University protocols.
- Training and capability-building activities are delivered professionally and contribute to improved staff competence.

Violence Prevention & Strategic Contribution

- Prevention campaigns and initiatives reflect sound clinical guidance and safe messaging.
- Collaboration with the Violence Prevention Health Promoter is proactive, constructive, and aligned with strategic priorities.
- Prevention activities demonstrate cultural responsiveness and relevance to the student population.

General Counselling Responsibilities

- Short-term counselling interventions are delivered effectively, using evidence-based, culturally responsive, and student-centred approaches that support wellbeing and autonomy.
- Students are referred appropriately and promptly when presenting issues fall outside the scope of short-term counselling, with clear communication and seamless transition to internal or external services.
- Clinical notes and required data are completed accurately, professionally, and within expected timeframes, meeting legal, ethical, and service standards.

- Professional knowledge is actively maintained, with ongoing engagement in relevant training, sector developments, and best-practice updates.
- Workshops, therapeutic groups, and self-help programmes are delivered competently, with content that is safe, relevant, and aligned with Student Health Service goals.
- Collaboration with Halls of Residence and other service areas is effective, contributing to staff capability and student wellbeing.
- Regular professional supervision is attended and applied, demonstrating reflective practice, ethical decision-making, and continuous improvement.
- Team participation is constructive and reliable, including contributing to meetings, supporting colleagues, and assisting with student counsellor placements when required.
- Critical incident and postvention responses are delivered calmly, competently, and in accordance with University protocols, ensuring student and staff safety.
- All practice aligns with the Code of Ethics of the relevant professional body, with concerns or conflicts raised promptly with the Clinical Manager.
- Students are assisted to overcome the difficulties which of concern to them within a maximum of five counselling sessions per academic year unless approval is given by the Clinical Manager Mental Health & Wellbeing.

Collaboration & System Improvement

- Effective relationships are maintained with internal and external partners.
- Contributions to policy, process improvement, and service development are constructive and evidence-informed.
- Feedback, trends, and insights are communicated appropriately to support continuous improvement.

Professionalism & Teamwork

- Professional standards, ethical obligations, and confidentiality requirements are consistently upheld.
- The counsellor contributes positively to team culture, communication, and shared goals.
- Professional development is maintained, and learning is applied to practice.
- Interactions in the course of performing duties are conducted professionally, respectfully and collaboratively.
- Valuable contribution and participation in relevant meetings and/or projects are 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 degree in counselling, clinical psychology or equivalent including social work
- Full membership of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors preferred or be a provisional member, or membership of a equivalent professional body
- Additional training in violence prevention, sexual harm response, family violence intervention, or trauma-specific modalities.

Desirable

- Master's degree in counselling, clinical psychology or equivalent.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Experience providing counselling or therapeutic support to individuals affected by interpersonal violence.
- Strong understanding of trauma, coercive control, sexual harm, and family/relationship violence.
- Experience conducting risk assessments and developing safety plans.
- Ability to provide consultation and guidance to staff on sensitive and complex issues.
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to engage with diverse student populations.
- Experience working across systems, including coordination with community agencies.
- Ability to work collaboratively within a multidisciplinary team.
- 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.

Preferred

- Experience working in tertiary education, youth mental health, or community violence-prevention settings.
- Experience developing or contributing to prevention campaigns or educational initiatives.
- Familiarity with Te Ao Māori, tikanga, and/or Pacific cultural frameworks.
- Experience working with diverse cultural communities, LGBTQIA+ students, and international students.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Calm, grounded, and able to respond effectively in crisis situations.
- Empathetic, non-judgemental, and able to build trust quickly.
- Committed to cultural safety and equitable outcomes for Māori, Pacific, and other priority groups.
- Strong professional boundaries, ethical judgement, and discretion.
- Confident presenting, training, or facilitating groups.
- Creative and collaborative approach to prevention and wellbeing initiatives.
- 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.