



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

# Te Rautaki Rangahau

Research Plan 2026-2030

# Rangahau Whakawhiti - Whaiwhakaaro - Whakahou Transformative Research - Bold thinking that makes a difference

We are a research-intensive university committed to research that is impactful and makes a tangible difference for New Zealand and its people through economic, environmental and societal advancement. We draw upon our unique characteristics and setting to work locally, nationally and internationally to address some of the most challenging issues of our time. We are committed to creating an environment where bold thinking is encouraged and our engagement with Māori is celebrated.

This research plan underpins and delivers on Kia Haere Whakamua University of Waikato Strategy 2025-2029 and is aligned with our University of Waikato Treaty Statement.

We will know we are successful when our:

- Research output is recognised, valued and used at national and international levels through uptake and rankings;
- Research effort is appropriately funded, and we are able to complete our research programmes in a timely manner;
- Research effort spans all disciplines and campuses and is collaborative with non-academic agencies;
- Research is well linked through our commitment to Te Tiriti to Māori, our Pacific neighbours, all New Zealanders, and the wider globe alike;
- Postgraduate research student cohort is growing and well supported;
- Research output supports a wide range of UN Sustainable Development Goals.



# Guiding Principles

Our activities and actions under this research plan are guided by four Pou:

## Kōtīhitihitanga:

We endeavour to generate and attain the highest standard of research. Doing so requires building trust and demonstrating reliability in our research plans, activities and findings. Examples of excellence and rigour will be evident through research that is ethical and impactful, peer-reviewed, and includes different knowledge systems.

## Whaipaianga:

Our research emphasises generating positive outcomes that advance knowledge and understanding while also generating tangible outcomes at local, regional, national, and global levels. Research that contributes to improvements in wellbeing, environment, and economy relies on multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches and partnerships that acknowledge the range of research stakeholders.

## Whanaungatanga:

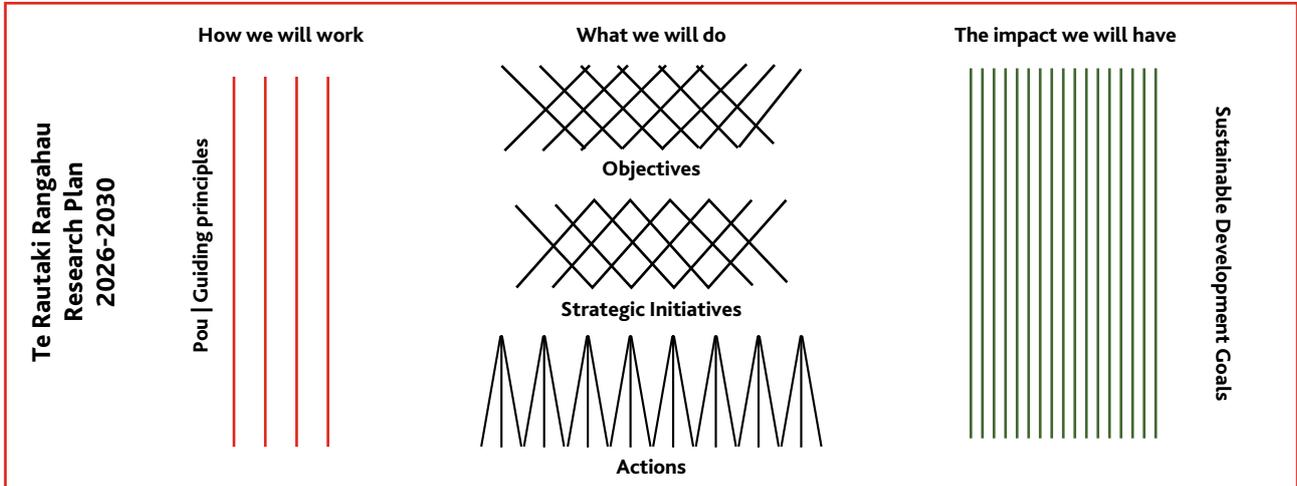
People and community are central to our research. We are committed to supporting our researchers and building a strong, multidisciplinary, and diverse research community that recognises strength and value in all disciplines and views. We incorporate relational contributions to inform the dynamics and quality of research – whether Māori, Pacific or of other origin.

## Kōtuituitanga:

Our ability to thrive as a research-intensive university is dependent upon delivering a sustainable culture of research. Through supporting each other, whether undergraduate/postgraduate students, emerging or expert researchers, our collective research skills and experience will grow stronger through collaboration. We are committed to developing a strong research support network and set of research tools.



# The Plan



This research plan focuses on nine objectives and eight strategic initiatives designed to deliver the research requirements of Kia Haere Whakamua Vision and Strategy 2025-2029. The Objectives are designed to deliver across multiple of the nine priorities of Kia Haere Whakamua and the strategic initiatives are designed to deliver across multiple of the nine Objectives of this plan. In turn, each of the Strategic Initiatives has a number of actions to guide our effort over the five-year period of this Research Plan.

Kia Haere Whakamua Priorities	Research Plan Objectives	Strategy Connections
1 A whole of institution focus on student recruitment, retention, and learner success	1. Improving impact, relevance and value of our research	2 3 5 6 7
2 Recognising and celebrating excellence	2. Growing international standing	1 2 7
3 Leadership in graduate-entry health programmes	3. Strengthening research partnerships and revenue	2 4 6 7 9
4 Developing people, capability and a culture of diversity and inclusivity	4. Building a sustainable research workforce	2 4 9
5 Giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi	5. Lifting postgraduate research student recruitment and success	1 4 7 8 9
6 Research impact and relevance	6. Upholding the articles and principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in our research activities	4 5
7 Enhanced internationalisation	7. Strengthening research presence in Tauranga	4 8
8 Development of the Tauranga campus	8. Developing a health research focus	3 4 6
9 Long-term operational sustainability	9. Encourage research collaboration across the University	2 4 5 6 8 9

# Objectives

## Objective 1:

Improving the impact, relevance and value of our research to ensure that our research is useful, usable and used at all levels – local, national and global — through multi- and inter-disciplinary research focusing on mission-led initiatives such as national priorities and global sustainable development goals.

## Objective 2:

Growing our international standing and lifting our international engagement and leadership in research through international research collaboration, participation in international initiatives, and identifying and leveraging our competitive research advantages.

## Objective 3:

Strengthening our research partnerships and lifting our research revenue through deliberate efforts to link our research with a wide range of partners and alignment of research effort with government funding opportunities and the needs of government, industry, commerce and society.

## Objective 4:

Building a sustainable research workforce through the development of a range of research tools, development opportunities and support networks delivered through the research office, HIKO Hub and research leadership structure across the University.

## Objective 5:

Lifting our postgraduate research student recruitment and success through fit-for-purpose, consistent and transparent processes and policies, distinctive postgraduate research student and supervisor development opportunities, career development opportunities and access to research support and scholarships.

## Objective 6:

Demonstrate the University of Waikato motto of Ko te Tangata (for the people) through upholding the articles and principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in our mātauranga Māori research activities, giving effect to Te Tiriti in tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori in our research, supporting Māori and Tangata Tiriti students and advancing Māori research careers.

## Objective 7:

Supporting the development of a strong research presence in Tauranga to unlock the natural advantages and the economic, commercial, marine and cultural needs of the wider Bay of Plenty region.

## Objective 8:

Supporting the development of a health research focus to support innovative solutions for the diverse needs of the people of New Zealand (such as hauora) and a fit-for-purpose health workforce for New Zealand.

## Objective 9:

Encourage collaboration across the University to promote the vast knowledge and skills of our researchers, strengthen multidisciplinary research and support operational sustainability including through the provision and support of University-wide resources and facilities.

# Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Initiatives	Research Plan Objectives								
	Improving impact, relevance & value	Growing our international standing	Strengthening our research partnerships	Building a sustainable research workforce	Lifting our postgraduate research student recruitment & success	Upholding the articles and principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi	A strong research presence in Tauranga	A health research focus	Encourage collaboration across the University
Research Institutes & Centres									
Expand HIKO Hub									
Partnerships for excellence									
Māori research									
Pacific research									
Research support									
Leverage our natural advantage									
Postgraduate research students									



**Strategic Initiative 1:**

Establish a network of mission-led multidisciplinary future-focused Research Institutes and Centres across the University to grow research funding, research partnerships, stakeholder engagement and a dynamic environment for postgraduate research students and early career staff.

**Strategic Initiative 2:**

Expand the HIKO Hub into and across the University's research activities to include HIKO Labs and HIKO Link to support commercial research partnerships, commercially aligned research and income growth.

**Strategic Initiative 3:**

Develop a range of partnerships for excellence with government agencies, non-government agencies, not-for-profit entities, iwi, and international initiatives, to grow our research and research impact profile, improve trust in research, data and science, and develop new funding streams.

**Strategic Initiative 4:**

Create an environment for Māori research to flourish through Māori-led initiatives and by supporting all of our staff to engage with and deliver on our University Treaty Statement.

**Strategic Initiative 5:**

Create an environment for Pacific research to flourish through Pacific-led initiatives and by supporting all of our staff to engage with and deliver on our Pacific-led initiatives and research engagements with Pacific nations.

**Strategic Initiative 6:**

Improve our research process systems, technology, research support tools, research facilities and capabilities, and career development support infrastructure to better enable the effectiveness of research effort (including our researchers, proposal development, research partnerships, the timely delivery of research outcomes, and the communication and sharing of our research activities and achievements).

**Strategic Initiative 7:**

Leverage our natural advantage as a place-based world leading research organisation through our environmental position in a regional, national and global sense, our relationship with Māori, and our agility as a nation of early adopters.

**Strategic Initiative 8:**

Create an environment for postgraduate research students to thrive through the provision of appropriate resources, academic and career development opportunities, cohort connections, and strong communities of practice in research supervision development.

It is recognised that there will be a number of mechanisms that will be used to implement Te Rautaki Rangahau / Research Plan 2026-2030 including, but not limited to, the Research Committee, Postgraduate Research Committee, Divisional Research Committees and Plans, Research Institute Directors and Plans, Māori Academic Board, and Pacific Strategy Committee. The Plan's success will depend on the allocation of resources from Central and Divisional allocations. Central resources are available to support the development of Research Institutes, strategic funds for the development of research partnerships and funding applications, research office support, commercial research development support, and School of Graduate Research support. Divisional resources will be required to support the development of Research Centres and Units, research career development, and facilities support.

# Actions - to be reviewed biennially

## Strategic Initiative 1 – Develop our Research Institutes and Centres

### Success metrics:

- The University of Waikato is nationally, and increasingly internationally, recognised as a research leader through our research rankings, success in funding and direct recognition and support from government and other stakeholders.

### Strategic actions:

- 1.1. Review our University-wide research profile annually through IRIS to identify research areas of strength, capability and critical mass.
- 1.2. Regularly review (5 yearly) our University Research Institutes and Centres with a view to transitioning or closing those that have completed their work, renewing those that have a new phase of work and starting new Research Institutes or Centres where a feasible business case can be made.
- 1.3. Recruit global experts to lead our University Research Institutes.
- 1.4. Assign research development, research management and contract management staff to support the development and growth of new Research Institutes or renewed phases of Research Institute missions.
- 1.5. Promote Research Institutes and Centres with potential partners and stakeholders and support a wider communication strategy for each.
- 1.6. Develop Research Institute and Centre space and facilities to best support achievement of the mission and support graduate research students, post-doctoral researchers and staff research needs and engagement.
- 1.7. Encourage and promote high-impact, multidisciplinary outputs that engage our expertise across and beyond the University.

## Strategic Initiative 2 – Build commercial research, services & partnerships

### Success metrics:

- Commercial research revenue is increased to more than 25% of the University's research revenue (>\$20M) over the next 5 years.
- Commercialisation project activity and revenue are increased by 10% per annum (target >\$1M in Year 1 - 2026).

### Strategic actions:

- 2.1. Widen the commercial research effort to include services, policy, evaluation, analytics and data services, standards development and executive practice collaborations as well as technology development, transfer and commercialisation.
- 2.2. Launch HIKO Link to provide service support for commercial engagement, partnerships, business development activities, contract, and project management; and develop University-wide CRM capability for commercial research R&D partnerships and to function as the University's tech transfer office.
- 2.3. Work with Pro Vice-Chancellors and Research Institute Directors to increase academic staff engagement with businesses in the Waikato, King Country, Bay of Plenty and Auckland with potential interest to invest in R&D.
- 2.4. Launch HIKO Labs to promote and provide access to lab facilities across the University and create public-private R&D facilities on campus with commercial partners.
- 2.5. Activate HIKO Hub as the go-to space for industry-community collaboration and connections, as the gateway to the University's IP (people, knowledge, labs, students), and as the host for events such as industry workshops, networking, CEO forums, start-up weekends, hackathons, and ShadowTech events.
- 2.6. Develop a Practice & Policy workstream and community of practice to support wide engagement in developing commercial research.
- 2.7. Leverage the HIKO brand in partnerships with entities like Sprout AgriTech, Tech in the Tron, councils, and NZ Tech Association to develop additional external strategic partnerships.
- 2.8. With the School of Graduate Research, secure co-funded PhD scholarships with industry; 5 in 2026, increasing to 10 per annum in subsequent years.



## Strategic Initiative 3 – Build partnerships for excellence

### Success metrics:

- The University's Impact Profile is leveraged by a range of influential regional, national and international partners.
- The University's research rankings improve year upon year.
- Our international research funding exceeds 25% of the University's research revenue (>\$20M) over the next 5 years.

### Strategic actions:

- 3.1. Build and develop our impact profile across the University: we will ensure all staff keep up-to-date research profiles, assess and reward excellence, and identify priority impact areas for investment.
- 3.2. Develop a Research Impact report: drawing from individual research profiles and activity in Research Centres and Institutes we will showcase the value of our research and use this report to grow our impact partners in the not-for-profit, government, and commercial sectors, from local to international scales.
- 3.3. Build strategic partnerships with Horizon Europe countries: we will identify our priority areas of strength, distinctiveness and quality, and develop at least two new relationships with high-profile Horizon Europe research organisations that create the foundation for future research collaboration.
- 3.4. Leverage our existing international partnerships to improve international research collaboration: we will partner with the International and Engagement Office to identify the most appropriate partners able to advance the profile and impact of 3-5 of our most promising research areas for investment.
- 3.5. Grow strategic long-term collaborations: our Research Centres and Institutes will be required to develop a Research Partnerships Plan, which will identify their strategic research partners best able to support high-impact, fundable projects from local to international scales, and outline how these relationships will be formalised and maintained.
- 3.6. Establish a central database and contact point for all research partnerships by the end of 2025 to improve coordination, visibility and access.



## Strategic Initiative 4 – Support Māori research

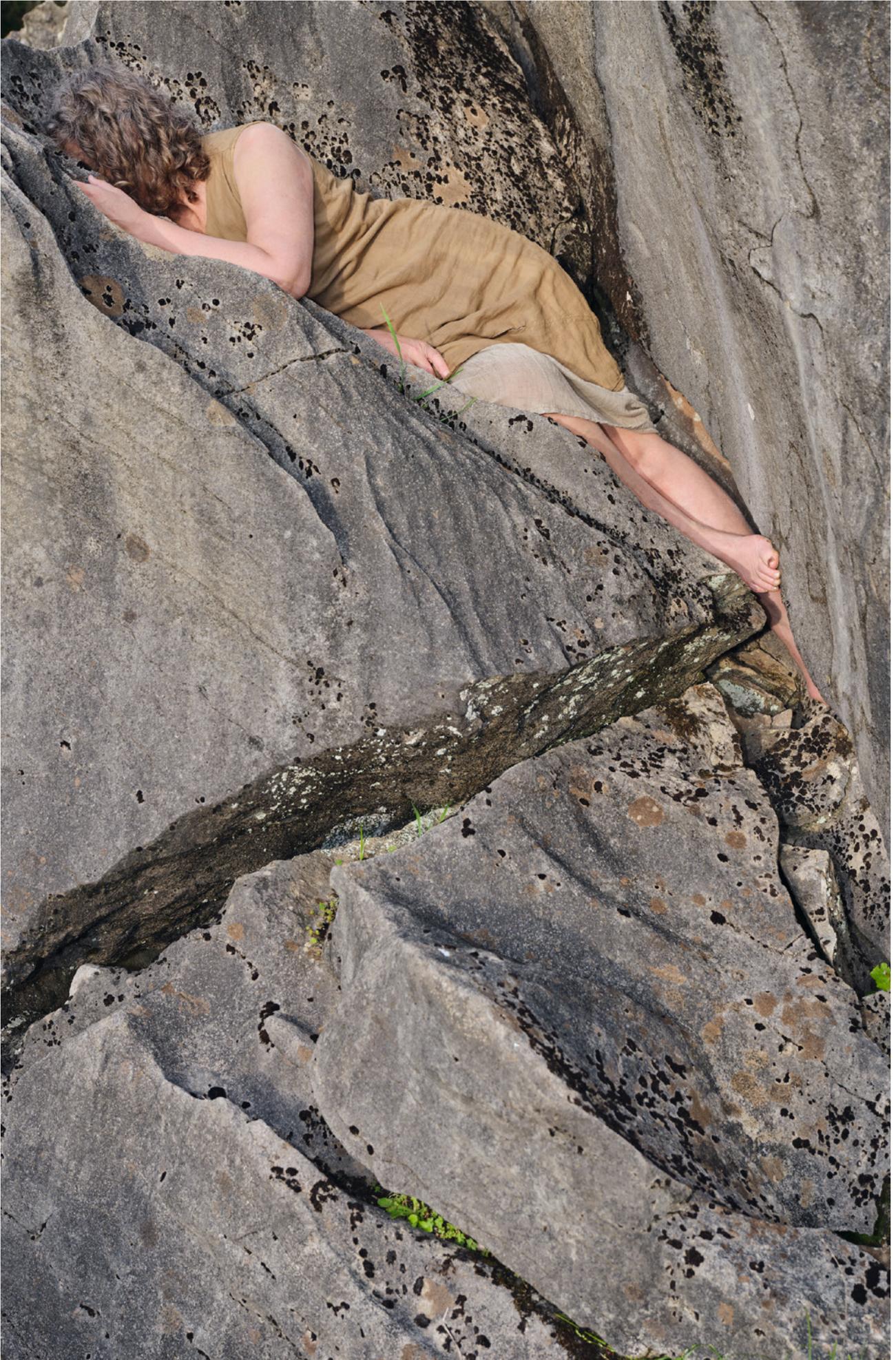
### Success metrics:

- Growth in funding for Māori research.
- Improved impact (alignment, partnership and uptake) of Māori research.
- Security of the University's unique place and identity as a focal point for Māori research.
- We are fulfilling our research contribution to the University's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

### Strategic actions:

- 4.1. Strengthen the research capacity and visibility of Māori staff with a focus on building excellent, valued, and externally funded and supported Māori-focused research.
- 4.2. Commitment to impactful research through research codesign and meaningful research relationships, partnerships and interactions with the Kīngitanga, Waikato-Tainui, iwi and Māori communities through support for Te Rōpū Manukura and Māori research hubs.
- 4.3. Encourage, support and promote publication of Māori research outputs and grow the profile of our Indigenous research effort through workshops on Māori engagement and tikanga.
- 4.4. Support and seek resource for Indigenous data sovereignty requirements through alignment with the Te Kāhui Raraunga Māori data governance model and Māori AI governance framework by all projects involving Māori data.
- 4.5. Engage all research staff in better development of Māori research strands in their research efforts through support mechanisms provided by the research office and other University resources.
- 4.6. Continue to provide particular support to Māori researchers across the University to engage with the research investment system.
- 4.7. Strengthen our postgraduate research student support for Māori students through targeted scholarships and research career development support.





## Strategic Initiative 5 – Support Pacific research

### Success metrics:

- Growth in funding for Pacific research.
- Improved alignment, partnership and uptake of Pacific research.
- Security of the University's unique place and identity as a focal point for Indigenous research.

### Strategic actions:

- 5.1. Strengthen the research capacity and visibility of Pacific staff with a focus on building excellent, valued and externally funded and supported Pacific-focused research.
- 5.2. Strengthen the research relationships, partnerships and interactions with Pacific nations, organisations and communities through support for a Pacific research hub and international engagements.
- 5.3. Encourage, support and promote publication of Pacific research outputs and grow the profile of our Indigenous research effort through workshops on Pacific culture.
- 5.4. Support Indigenous data sovereignty requirements including Pacific-led methodologies and protocols for cross-border data transfer.
- 5.5. Continue to provide particular support to Pacific researchers across the University to engage with the research investment system.
- 5.6. Strengthen our postgraduate research student support for Pacific students through targeted scholarships and research career development support.

## Strategic Initiative 6 – Improve our research support tools and capability

### Success metrics:

- Our research is appropriately funded (>\$60 million total earned revenue in 2027, >\$50 million of which is external research income), and we are able to complete our research programmes in an efficient and timely manner.
- Professional staff supporting research, scholarships and postgraduate research report high levels of job satisfaction with improved staff retention.
- Our ranking is internationally competitive.

### Strategic actions:

- 6.1. Run a Taskforce on Accelerating Research Project delivery during 2025 to identify key reasons why our projects run behind schedule, and design and implement research management systems and processes to address the need.
- 6.2. Structure our research support functions to enable the changing research function and structure across the University and across the sector.
- 6.3. Ensure the research facilities required for research success are catalogued, resourced, maintained and available for interdisciplinary research across the University.
- 6.4. Work with the Systems Accounting team in Finance to develop and implement accounting system reports that provide the desired level of transparency of income and costs for research projects.
- 6.5. Support applications for research projects to competitive research funds, through drop-in sessions and 1:1 coaching, and by supporting them to show the potential economic, environmental or health benefits and the rationale for New Zealand investing in their proposed research.
- 6.6. Work with Communications on delivering a broad and inclusive plan to communicate research outcomes and impact and ensure it is clearly recognised as a University of Waikato product.
- 6.7. Support growing external research investment and partnerships by identifying non-government organisations, such as commercial entities, that benefit from our research effort.
- 6.8. Support growing external research investment by collaborating with the University of Waikato Foundation to identify donors with particular interest in the relevant research.
- 6.9. Establish an attractive career pathway for professional staff who support research and postgraduate research with clear promotion criteria and support for ongoing professional development to build capability.
- 6.10. Support the development of University-wide research facilities to underpin Research Institutes, Centres, Units and other strategic initiatives.

## Strategic Initiative 7 – Leverage our natural advantage

### Success metrics:

- Increased international engagement, in-kind support and investment in our research effort at the University of Waikato.

### Strategic actions:

- 7.1. Strengthen regional research ties through identifying key agencies and contacts best aligned with our research priorities; and pursue research MoUs with at least 3–5 local/regional partners to advance our place-based research potential, profile and future activities.
- 7.2. Embed place-based research in internal funding by incorporating place-based priorities into internal research funding and scholarships, with clear criteria for how this will be promoted, assessed, and involve collaboration with external partnerships.
- 7.3. Strengthen our research advantage across the wider Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions through engagement in societal and commercial interests throughout these regions.
- 7.4. Celebrate and advance Indigenous research by partnering with iwi Māori and Pacific peoples to co-develop at least 3–5 new Indigenous-led research initiatives that reflect Māori and Pacific perspectives.
- 7.5. Launch a research impact campaign by developing and rolling out a communications plan by the end of 2025 that showcases our place-based research strengths and how our research improves places, and which drives new international collaborations.

## Strategic Initiative 8 – Grow our postgraduate research student numbers and success

### Success metrics:

- Postgraduate recruitment lifted by 20% over five years with more than 5 doctoral partnership scholarships awarded per year.
- The median DPhil thesis submission timescales for all Schools/Faculty have reduced to below 4 years FTE with a reduced variance.
- Our postgraduate students are successful in their career aspirations.

### Strategic actions:

- 8.1. Integrate our postgraduate research student scholarships and research project awards to provide a common system and equal opportunity and fit-for-purpose level of support for all of our postgraduate research student cohort.
- 8.2. Review and redevelop processes and guidelines to ensure a robust and sustainable postgraduate research programme that provides clarity and consistency to postgraduate research students and supervisors.
- 8.3. Deliver a Postgraduate Researcher Development Programme to promote successful research outcomes and support career development of our postgraduate research students through transferable skills.
- 8.4. Foster a community of practice in postgraduate research supervision, including a structured development programme to grow supervision capacity and capability.
- 8.5. Leverage new and emerging international, co-funded and applied partnerships to strengthen local to global connectivity, grow our cohort, and promote postgraduate research impact.
- 8.6. Provide an inclusive and supportive onboarding experience that creates a strong postgraduate research community and sets the foundations for research success.





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