



PhD Scholarship Opportunity

***“How can supervisors support postgraduate students researching confronting, sensitive, or dangerous topics?
Towards frameworks for practice”***

Fully funded 3-year University of Waikato Seeker Doctoral Scholarship

**Te Wānanga Toi Tangata Division of Education
University of Waikato, Tauranga, New Zealand**

About this opportunity

Are you passionate about supporting postgraduate students who engage with emotionally demanding or high-risk research topics? This fully funded PhD scholarship offers the opportunity to explore how supervisors can best support postgraduate research students working in complex, sensitive, or dangerous research spaces. The successful candidate's research project will aim to produce practical guidelines and tools that those supervising postgraduate research can use to promote and oversee wellbeing and safety for students researching topics that may involve:

- Trauma (e.g. acute, complex, vicarious, intergenerational ...) or emotional distress
- Dangerous fieldwork or ethically complex environments
- Intersectional identities and marginalised communities

The project will involve developing and piloting tools for practice that can be used in the context of postgraduate supervision to enact a duty of care and promote postgraduate researcher wellbeing. The project will preferably take the form of a [PhD with publication](#) and will be designed accordingly.

This PhD is funded through a [University of Waikato Seeker Doctoral Scholarship](#), with up to NZD \$30,000 per year for up to 36 months + domestic tuition fees and Student Services Fee.

About you

The ideal candidate for this project will bring excellent academic skills (written and oral communication; literature work; empirical research experience; academic publishing experience) and will be well prepared to undertake a qualitative research project.

You will also have relevant academic and/or professional background, which may be in any of:

- Higher education studies
- Social work, counselling, or another person-centred profession
- Community development
- Adult learning

Supervisory team

The successful candidate will be supported by an excellent and interdisciplinary team of supervisors:

- [Dr Katrina McChesney](#) (chief supervisor) – A higher and postgraduate education researcher specialising in inclusive practice, including trauma-informed approaches
- [Dr Kelly Glubb-Smith](#) (co-supervisor) – A registered social worker, social work lecturer and researcher, specialising in ethical decision-making and cultural responsiveness
- [Professor Claire McLachlan](#) (co-supervisor) – A senior leader in education and education research, with prior research focusing on trauma and burnout in education

Location

The successful candidate will be based at the University of Waikato's [Tauranga campus](#). If the successful candidate is an international student, their visa will need to specify Tauranga.

Why apply?

- Full funding including a competitive stipend and tuition costs
- Access to expert interdisciplinary supervision
- Contribution to a growing field of trauma-informed and inclusive higher education
- Shape tools for academic practice, leading to real-world impact
- Opportunity to gain academic publishing experience and disseminate work quickly through the PhD with publication format

The application process

Interested candidates should submit an application in a single PDF document comprising:

- 1) a letter of motivation that clearly outlines
 - a. your interest in the advertised project and
 - b. the relevant academic and/or professional background you bring to the project
- 2) a curriculum vitae, including details of academic publications if applicable
- 3) academic transcripts
- 4) for international applicants, your IELTS or equivalent English language testing results (completed within the past 2 years)
- 5) a sample of your prior academic writing (sole-authored)
- 6) a three-page proposal that displays your ability to conceptualise a project of this kind in the New Zealand context
- 7) contact details for two academic referees

This application should be sent to **Dr Katrina McChesney** - katrina.mcchesney@waikato.ac.nz

Review of applications will begin on 1 September 2025 and continue until 31 October 2025, or earlier if the position is filled. We encourage early applications.

Interviews of shortlisted candidates will be conducted via video conferencing.

Upon approval from the selection committee, the successful applicant will be guided through the Doctor of Philosophy enrolment process.

Final acceptance is subject to approval by the University of Waikato School of Graduate Research.