

Pokaia Nepia Scholarship - 2025

The Pokaia Nepia Scholarship was established in 2024 through a partnership between Waikato-Tainui and settlement funds held by Te Papa Atawhai Department of Conservation. The Scholarship is in memory of kaumatua Pokai Nepia. Fondly known as Uncle Poka was instrumental to many organisations in the Waikato region, creating rich channels of communication and engagement to Waikato-Tainui. Uncle Poka was a kaumatua of immense wisdom, a friend to many communities and organizations, and a cornerstone of love and strength for his beloved wife, children, and many mokopuna. His life was a melody, often carried by the soulful notes of his saxophone, a talent that reflected the depth and beauty of his character. Raised in the world of the Kiingitanga, Uncle Poka embodied the spirit of service, a calling he fulfilled with unwavering commitment and humility. To all who sought his advice and support, he provided confidence and guidance, offering a steady hand in moments of uncertainty. Whether speaking at formal events or standing proudly on the pae, his presence brought reassurance and mana, elevating the occasion with his humility and grace.

Uncle Poka had an unshakable belief in the greater kaupapa, a vision that extended beyond himself to the legacy he wanted to create for his whānau and his people. His generosity of spirit meant he rarely said "no," always encouraging others to strive for their best and live with purpose. He saw potential in everyone and nurtured it with the quiet strength of a true rangatira.

Now, as he journeys beyond the veil, we carry his lessons, his laughter, and his aroha within us. Uncle Poka's legacy will continue to guide and inspire, a testament to a life lived in service, love, and unwavering belief in the betterment of his people. Uncle Poka would be honoured to have this scholarship presented in his name, and the name of his whānau.

Each year, \$10,000 is available to support students from Waikato-Tainui in their academic endeavours.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The scholarship supports Waikato-Tainui uri to pursue studies at the University of Waikato, focusing on areas that align with the strategic aspirations of the iwi. This scholarship enables the Education, Training, and Development of Waikato-Tainui uri, helping to build a thriving future.

2. Eligibility and Selection Criteria

2.1. To be eligible, applicants must:

- 2.1.1. be a registered Waikato-Tainui tribal member.
- 2.1.2. be enrolled in full-time study (a full-time academic year comprises 120 points) in any programme of study up to and including Masters by Research. To be clear, doctoral and MPhil study is excluded.
- 2.1.3. be eligible for domestic fees status (i.e., be a NZ Citizen, NZ Permanent Resident, NZ Resident Class Visa holder, or Australian Citizen/Permanent Resident domiciled in NZ) of Māori descent

2.2. Past recipients who meet the current eligibility criteria may reapply.

2.3. Selection is based on:

2.3.1. academic merit.

2.3.2. the applicant's commitment to their continue studies, and reason for studying that degree-programme.

2.3.3. the alignment of the applicant's study to current areas of strategic relevance to Waikato-Tainui. This may include but are not limited to:

- knowledge and application of the Kīngitanga, including the poukai and Koroneihana.
- community involvement (particularly in the Waikato region).

2.3.4. Preference may be given to applicants who:

- are pursuing environmental studies.
- have not previously held the scholarship.

2.4. Ongoing scholarship eligibility is based on recipients:

2.4.1. remaining enrolled as per clause 2.1.2.

2.4.2. attending the award ceremony.

3. Value, Tenure and Awarding

3.1. The scholarship shall be awarded each year by the partners listed in the background with the number of scholarships awarded at their discretion.

3.1.1. The University of Waikato will process scholarship offers and administration

3.1.2. The presentation of the Scholarship will be organised and administered by the funders.

3.2. The scholarship will be paid directly to the recipient(s) in one lump sum after the withdrawal date of B Trimester or the award ceremony (whichever is later).

3.3. Each scholarship has **a minimum value of \$2,500**, with a total combined value of all scholarship offers each year coming to a maximum of \$10,000.

3.4. The scholarships also include:

3.4.1. support from [Māori ki Waikato](#).

3.4.2. potential for a paid internship with Te Papa Atawhai Department of Conservation and/or Waikato-Tainui. The internship will be coordinated by those organisations with timing of the internship in agreement with the student.

3.5. The Scholarship has a maximum tenure of one year and must be taken up in the year in which it is offered.

3.6. Successful applicants will be advised of the offer of their scholarship via their MyWaikato portal and must accept the offer by the prescribed date or the offer will lapse.

3.7. In accepting the scholarship, the recipient will be deemed to have:

3.7.1. agreed to attend the award ceremony organised by the funders.

3.7.2. agreed to participate in any publicity concerning the Scholarship arranged by the funders and/or the University of Waikato.

- 3.7.3. understood that Waikato-Tainui may keep application documents for consideration of internship opportunities, and that these may be shared with the partners listed in the scholarship background.
- 3.7.4. agreed that the partners listed in the scholarship background may request up-to-date contact details from the University of Waikato in future years to assist them to maintain contact with past Scholarship recipients.

4. Application

- 4.1. The closing date for the online applications is **30 June every year**.
- 4.2. As part of the online application, each applicant must provide information the following:
 - 4.2.1. Complete the online personal statement form that outlines:
 - what inspired you to pursue your degree?
 - what are your academic goals for the next few years, and how do these align with your career aspirations?
 - explain your knowledge and application of the Kīngitanga, including the poukai and Koroneihana.
 - How do you see your studies benefiting the your iwi | hapuu | marae once you graduate?
 - are there any specific issues or causes that you're particularly motivated to address (e.g., environmental)? If so, why?
- 4.3. Upload two references (one academic and one character). Normally, a reference should not be from an immediate whaanau member.
- 4.4. Provide their Waikato-Tainui Tribal registration number. Applicant details will be sent to Waikato-Tainui to confirm recipients are registered members, prior to the selection panel being held.

5. Selection Panel

- 5.1. The Selection Panel will comprise a maximum one representative each of Waikato-Tainui Holdings, Te Papa Atawhai Department of Conservation, and up to two members of Uncle Poka's whaanau, as well as the University of Waikato's Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori (or nominee).
- 5.2. The Selection Panel may request a meeting with applicants as part of the selection process.
- 5.3. The Selection Panel may refrain from making a decision if it finds no applicant of sufficient merit.
- 5.4. The Selection Panel's decisions are final and no further correspondence will be entered into following the selection meeting.

6. Other Conditions

- 6.1. The Scholarship may be held together with any other scholarship, award or prize unless the conditions of the other preclude this.

- 6.2. The funders (through the University of Waikato) and/or the University of Waikato may terminate this scholarship at any time and recoup any funds disbursed if the holder withdraws from the University during the tenure of the Scholarship, brings the funders or the University or funder into disrepute¹, or is otherwise not complying with the conditions governing the Scholarship
- 6.3. Should a recipient withdraw from any papers, without adding sufficient papers to maintain an overall enrolment in a minimum of 120-points for the academic year, the University may ask for the Scholarship to be repaid.
- 6.4. Recipients should seek independent financial advice about any tax implications of their Scholarship.
- 6.5. The funders may from time to time vary these regulations.

¹ See [Code of Student Conduct](#)