

UNIVERSITIES NEW ZEALAND – TE PŌKAI TARA
POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title	Communications Manager
Reports to	Chief Executive
Location	Wellington
Date	February 2023

BACKGROUND

Universities New Zealand – Te Pōkai Tara advocates for university education and research activities by promoting the common interests of the New Zealand universities through coordinated action across the sector. It is a statutory body with responsibilities for the quality assurance of university academic programmes, university entrance and scholarships.

Universities NZ works at the interface between government and the universities. It makes an informed contribution to policy issues, maintains dialogue between government and the universities, and contributes well-argued, unified responses to developments that may affect university autonomy or New Zealand’s comparative position with international university systems. It also maintains key linkages within the international community.

Led by a committee comprising New Zealand’s eight Vice-Chancellors (the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors’ Committee - NZVCC), much of Universities NZ’s work is undertaken through committees and other groups generally comprising a representative from each university. Universities NZ’s activities are supported by a small Wellington-based team.

Universities New Zealand’s communications are strongly informed by two key documents – both developed with and approved by the eight Vice-Chancellors collectively. These are:

- Universities NZ Engagement Strategy – detailing university sector engagement objectives and approaches.
- Universities NZ Issues and Response Document – detailing a range of frequently asked questions from media and other stakeholders, with agreed responses and positions.

The Chief Executive of Universities New Zealand has a delegated authority to speak to the media and other stakeholder groups on behalf of Universities New Zealand when messages align with the Universities NZ Engagement Strategy and/or the Issues and Responses document.

POSITION PURPOSES

- To promote awareness and appreciation of the value of universities to New Zealand and its people.
- To build Universities NZ's profile as a leading contributor to issues of importance in university and wider education sector.
- To provide strategic and tactical communications advice and services to Universities NZ.
- To provide some coordination of the Communications Directors and their staff across the New Zealand university sector.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

Strategy and planning

- Develop and operationalise Universities NZ's communications strategy.
- Contribute to the development and maintenance of the Universities NZ Engagement Strategy, and the Universities NZ Issues and Response Document.
- Provide strategic advice on communications and the promotion of Universities NZ's position.
- Develop and run communications campaigns – working with or overseeing staff or contractors for campaigns.

Communications

- Prepare media releases, online newsletters, viewpoints/blogs, speeches and presentations and respond to media enquiries, as required.
- Help communicate complex evidence and analyses to engaged but non-technical audiences.
- Proactively identify and pursue opportunities for the Chief Executive to speak to relevant stakeholder groups and for disseminating information via Op Eds, interviews, and through other media channels.
- Manage key media relationships and difficult and complex media issues.
- Monitor relevant national and international media coverage.
- Attend meetings of Universities New Zealand committees to ensure awareness of existing, emerging, and potential issues, positions, and opportunities for communications.
- Produce the Universities New Zealand online newsletter six times a year. Maintain and apply editorial policy that ensures all content contributes to UNZ's Engagement Strategy and is interesting, surprising, and engaging.
- Peer-review UNZ staff's external-facing communications (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, submissions, reports) to ensure spelling and other things are correct and that everything is consistent and to agreed house style
- Oversee the Universities New Zealand website (www.universitiesnz.ac.nz) – with overall responsibility for style, structure and oversight for ensuring that content is current and accurate. *[Note that actual maintenance of web content is done by a UNZ administrator to standards and policies set by the Communications Manager]*
- Support the publication of Universities NZ handbooks and guides for students considering study at a university, including managing the website www.thinkingaboutuni.nz

- Provide advice and assistance on communications to the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA), as required.

Staffing

UNZ took on a paid communications intern for the first time in 2021 for one day per week to assist with monitoring social media and maintaining content on social media, and generally providing support and assistance on newsletter articles, website maintenance, and other communications work. The current intern is a third year student completing a Bachelor of Communications Degree majoring in Media Studies and minoring in Public Relations. The intern was recruited by the Communications Manager who also provided training and support and extended her to a second year in 2023.

- Determine the ongoing need for intern support. Where the need is seen as useful, recruit, train, support, and supervise a communications intern with hours and duration of any internship agreed with the Chief Executive.

Relationship management across the university sector

- Work co-operatively with university communications staff in a way that enables them to contribute to the collective interests of universities and adds value to the individual universities' communications.
- Work with university communications staff to ensure the sector is as well-coordinated and joined up as possible in responding to issues and opportunities.
- Assist and advise, as necessary, to improve the coordination of messages and communications on key issues with university communications staff and relevant UNZ staff.
- Foster a climate of understanding and trust with communications managers in the universities.
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with communications managers in related organisations, professional bodies, government agencies and the business community.

Relationship management - other

- Develop and maintain networks with communications staff in relevant ministerial offices and Government agencies.

Team work

- Contribute as an active and supportive member of the Universities NZ staff and advisor to the Vice-Chancellors, committed to Universities NZ's strategic objectives.
- Support the work of Universities New Zealand's committees.
- Display behaviour which contributes to a constructive culture including behavioural alignment to the integrity, ethics and values of the organisation and the university sector.

Other duties as required

- Contribute to wider Universities NZ planning, projects and operations as required by the Chief Executive.

KEY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Internal

- Chair and Deputy Chair of Universities NZ
- UNZ Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive
- University sector communications staff

- UNZ staff
- UNZ committees

External

- News media
- Communications staff in Ministers' offices, key government agencies, businesses and other relevant organisations
- External suppliers of communications services.

PERSON SPECIFICATIONS

Qualifications

- Tertiary qualification.

Skills and Experience

- A generalist with experience overseeing communications in small to medium sized organisations with a preference for someone who has worked in either the university sector or the public sector.
- Experience working across all modern communications channels – traditional media, web, and social media.
- An ability to summarise complex issues accurately and succinctly and to present preferred positions quickly, simply, and effectively – both verbally and in writing.

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS – FEBRUARY 2023

- Universities NZ sets salary ranges based on comparable roles in the public sector. For this role, the median (100%) salary is \$90,000. Universities New Zealand's salary policy allows for remuneration anywhere from 85% (76,500) to 110% (\$99,000) depending upon skills and experience. Universities New Zealand will only appoint above the median where a candidate has skills and experience that mean they are likely to be fully competent in the role within a few months of commencing.
- Universities NZ will provide a cellphone or will cover the cost of an existing cellphone. This role will need to be contactable outside normal office hours for the few times each year when media need a contact or a comment urgently.
- This role may require a moderate amount of domestic travel.