

UNIVERSITIES NEW ZEALAND — TE PŌKAI TARA

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title: **Secretary General**

Reports to: Chair, Universities New Zealand

Location: Wellington

BACKGROUND

Universities New Zealand – Te Pōkai Tara promotes the common interests of the New Zealand universities through coordination of 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 (UNZ) assists the Vice-Chancellors of the universities at the interface between public policy and higher education. It assists the Vice-Chancellors in making an informed contribution to policy issues, engaging in dialogue between government and the universities. UNZ works with Vice-Chancellors to develop well-argued, unified responses to policy and to public debate that may impact on university autonomy, financial viability, research and teaching, or student learning.

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

POSITION PURPOSE

The Secretary General is responsible for leading UNZ with a specific focus on supporting the Vice-Chancellors.

The Secretary General leads a small team and is responsible for providing clear direction and prioritisation for the organisation. The Secretary General ensures the organisation meets its statutory obligations in the quality assurance of university academic programmes, university entrance and scholarships.

Other responsibilities include identifying issues relevant to the sector and promoting Vice-Chancellor engagement on matters affecting the universities. The role works in partnership with the Chair of UNZ to lead meetings of the Vice-Chancellors' Committee and prepare public statements when required. The role is responsible for maintaining oversight of UNZ's other committees and expert groups.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

Leadership

1. Ensure that UNZ's statutory responsibilities are effectively undertaken.
2. Provide pro-active advice to the Vice-Chancellors and UNZ's committees on the impact of government initiatives and other developments affecting the university sector.
3. Provide clear direction and prioritisation for UNZ staff by ensuring there is an effective annual plan that underpins all the organisation's activities.
4. Provide leadership in the identification of issues that may require UNZ to engage with the media, and make recommendations to the Chair of UNZ, or the relevant committee chair, about the position that UNZ should articulate to the media.
5. Ensure that UNZ's activities are supported by a positive organisational culture.
6. Maintain oversight of UNZ's committees and expert groups.

Monitoring and Policy Advice

1. Take a proactive approach to identifying relevant policy issues, facilitating discussion and supporting the articulation of common views on policy issues.
2. Assist the Vice-Chancellors in developing strong, unified and well-argued responses to policy proposals impacting the university sector.
3. Commission research to provide the evidence base for the policies and proposals advanced on behalf of the university sector.

Operations

1. Lead all aspects of staff management, including recruitment, staff development, and performance and salary reviews.
2. Continuously review the resources utilised by UNZ, ensuring that the work of staff is focused on activities that will add the most value to the universities collectively. Provide clear direction and prioritisation of activities to UNZ staff.
3. Manage the UNZ budget, approve expenditure within delegated authority, and ensure accountability reporting is effectively completed.
4. Negotiate contracts for the provision of services to UNZ as approved by the Vice-Chancellors.

Relationship Management

1. Identify, initiate and maintain working relationships with a range of key stakeholders, including government agencies, universities, the professions and the wider tertiary sector.
2. Build positive relationships and trust across government, universities and key agencies to provide a foundation for influence and impact.

General

1. Provide effective support to the Chair and Deputy Chair of UNZ.
2. Undertake special projects and assignments as requested by the Chair of UNZ.
3. Take responsibility for providing support to specific UNZ committees as appropriate to balance the workload across UNZ staff.
4. Support the Chair of UNZ in engaging with the Chancellors Committee as required.

5. Any other duties as requested by the Chair of UNZ.
6. Represent UNZ at meetings when requested to do so by the Chair of UNZ.

KEY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Internal

- Chair and Deputy Chair of UNZ
- Other Vice-Chancellors
- UNZ staff
- Conveners and members of UNZ committees and expert groups

External

- Senior managers in government agencies, including the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Tertiary Education Commission, Ministry of Education, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Education New Zealand and New Zealand Public Research Organisations that have direct engagement with policy and programmes of relevance to the universities.
- Senior staff in other key agencies, including the Royal Society Te Apārangi, Science New Zealand and professional bodies of relevance to the universities.
- Key staff in the offices of Ministers with responsibility for tertiary education and research and science, as well as Opposition spokespeople for these portfolios.

PERSON SPECIFICATIONS

Qualifications

A university qualification is required, preferably at postgraduate level.

Skills and Experience Required

- Demonstrated commitment to the higher education sector and to the important role of universities in contemporary society.
- Demonstrated staff management experience with the ability to foster teamwork and collaboration on shared programmes of work.
- Demonstrated financial management experience with evidence of a strong focus on the best use of resources and operational innovation that delivers gains in efficiency and effectiveness.
- Sound understanding of the New Zealand university system and its international context.
- Sound understanding of the workings of government and experience in public policy.
- Sound understanding of communications and media engagement in the modern media environment. Demonstrated experience in preparing public statements on policy issues.
- Demonstrated ability to achieve results in a complex and dynamic environment.
- Exemplary interpersonal and relationship management skills.

Competencies and Personal Characteristics

- Provides a clear sense of purpose, is well organised and has good forward planning skills.
- Consistently demonstrates outstanding communication and listening skills.
- Demonstrates emotional intelligence in relationship-building and influence; builds, maintains and uses effective internal and external working relationships; and demonstrates a deep and acute understanding of political environments.
- Critically analyses complex information and makes succinct recommendations.
- Is resilient, maintains effective performance when under pressure, always acts professionally, and responds effectively to ambiguity.
- Sets high personal and professional standards for self and staff, assumes responsibility and accountability for successfully completing assignments or tasks, and consistently gives careful attention to all the detailed aspects of the role.
- Flexible and co-operative, with a positive “can do” attitude.
- Capable of developing innovative approaches to resource constraints and prioritisation of work and organising tasks to make best use of time and resources.
- Demonstrates an understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its implications for the university sector and at least basic competence in te reo and tikanga Māori.