

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE & THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO PARTNERSHIP SEED FUND

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

1. The University of Waikato (Waikato) and The University of Newcastle (Newcastle) have a long-standing relationship built on collaboration across a wide range of areas from academic and research exchanges to student mobility and professional services.
2. To create additional opportunities for collaboration, Waikato and Newcastle signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2024. Our partnership focuses on research collaboration, exchange programmes, joint programmes, and partnerships with industry in both New Zealand and Australia. These activities aim to promote academic and professional excellence through innovative collaboration.
3. To develop our partnership, Waikato and Newcastle established the Partnership Seed Fund. The Fund acts as a catalyst for early-stage initiatives that deepen collaboration, provide pathways to scalable outcomes (such as co-publications, external research bids, or strategic stakeholder engagement), that enhance the global impact of both institutions.
4. To date, the Fund has supported 21 collaborations involving more than 110 staff, half of which are early career researchers; ensuring the next generation of academics gain valuable international experience and networks.

2026 SEED FUND CALL

5. The Seed Fund enables academic and professional services staff to pilot groundbreaking, high-potential projects that explore novel and interdisciplinary ideas. It provides the initial resources to kickstart joint initiatives in research, teaching and professional services. Seed funding lays the ground for larger scale projects and helps positions our institutions for large-scale external funding.
6. The Seed Fund is a strategic mechanism for professional development, particularly for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and Early Career Professionals. It supports the growth of global citizenship by helping individuals develop the relationships, confidence, and capabilities needed to work across cultures and disciplines.
7. The Seed Fund supports collaborative initiatives in research, teaching, and professional services. The amount invested in each stream may vary, depending on the proposals received and the shared priorities of the two universities.
8. Proposals are strongly encouraged from ECRs and/or Indigenous staff, and we particularly value project teams that include doctoral candidates in meaningful roles. The Fund provides a platform for emerging talent to build international profiles, gain experience with collaborative research and teaching, and engage with global partners.

9. We strongly encourage transdisciplinary proposals that bring together academic and professional staff across institutional and disciplinary boundaries and push the limits of conventional collaboration to address complex challenges and generate scalable outcomes.
10. Successful proposals will demonstrate a pathway to tangible outcomes and impact such as joint publications, applications for external funding, engagement with stakeholders, or longer-term collaboration.
11. All projects should contribute to deepening the UoW–UoN partnership and may include activities such as, including:
 - Research collaboration, including the promulgation of research outcomes.
 - Collaborative teaching initiatives that enrich the student experience.
 - Exchange of academic and professional knowledge, including sharing good practice.
 - Acquisition of joint research funding.
 - Joint centres of teaching / professional excellence / research.
 - Exchange programs, including researchers, academic and professional staff.
 - Joint activities, including meetings, seminars, symposia, lectures, workshops, and conferences.

Timeline

12. The timeline for this funding round is as follows.

Applications open	Monday 19 January 2026
Applications due	Monday 9 March 2026
Peer review and funding panel	March-April
Applicants notified	Monday 18 May 2026
Project time	June to December 2026
Reports due	February 2027

Eligibility

13. A lead investigator/project lead is required from both Waikato and Newcastle. Leads must be staff on continuing appointments or fixed term staff whose contract extends beyond the term of the funding. We encourage project teams to include PhD candidates in their applications where feasible.
14. Individuals may only be involved in up to two proposals per year, either the lead applicant on one proposal and associate applicant on another, or as associate applicant on two proposals.
15. Lead investigators on projects funded in the previous year's round may not apply as a lead investigator in this round. They may be involved as an associated investigator.

16. An individual from organisations outside Waikato and Newcastle can be included in the project team (e.g., university, research institute, business, NGO, government agency) but you cannot apply for funding to support them or their activities/travel.

Value

17. The total funding available for this call is AU\$50,000 from The University of Newcastle and NZ\$50,000 NZD from The University of Waikato.
18. The maximum value of a project is AU\$15,000. Funding requests do not need to be matched equally up to the value of AU\$15,000 but full funding requests from one partner will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
19. Funding will not be transferred between organisations, so activities delivered at Newcastle or at Waikato will be funded by the relevant host organisation.
20. The funding is to be utilised between July to December 2026. Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and need to be requested in advance with an email to Global Partnerships Team at Newcastle (Global-Partnerships@newcastle.edu.au), and the Global Engagement and Partnerships Team at Waikato (global@waikato.ac.nz).

Budget

21. Applicants must provide a budget within their application. This should include a breakdown of the projected costs. This budget will inform the selection panel when awarding funding.
22. Project teams are advised to work with their Research Management Advisor/Line Manager (Waikato) or Executive Officer/Finance Business Partner (Newcastle) to prepare a realistic budget and complete the budget template.
23. Only the costs listed in the original application and approved in the budget will be funded. Requests for budget changes must be submitted in advance and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Eligible and ineligible costs are detailed in Appendix One.

Selection

24. Proposals need to be written in a language that is suitable for a multi-disciplinary panel to read and assess.
25. All proposals will be assessed through a transparent, fair, and joint review process designed to reflect the strategic priorities of both universities. Each application will be assessed against several criteria including excellence, innovation, partnership impact, and reputation. More details on the assessment criteria are in Appendix Two.
26. Proposals will be assessed internally by international deans, associate deans research and/or peer reviewers, as appropriate. Funding decisions will then be made by a funding panel including representatives from Waikato and Newcastle representing expertise in research, teaching, and professional services.

Awarding and feedback

27. Successful applicants will receive a formal email outlining the approved budget, reporting requirements, and next steps.
28. Upon confirmation from the Waikato International and Engagement Office and/or Newcastle Global Office that an application for seed funding has been successful, applicants are permitted to commence their projects.
29. Please note that if a successful applicant cancels their project, they must inform the Waikato International and Engagement Office and/or Newcastle Global office immediately so that funding records can be updated/recouped.
30. At Waikato, the funds will be transferred to the principal investigator's existing project account in the project accounting system. At Newcastle, the funds will be allocated to a relevant cost collector within the School.
31. Accommodation/travel bookings, visas and changes to government travel advice is the responsibility of the applicants in accordance with relevant Travel Policy and Procedures.

Reporting

32. Recipients of the Seed Fund are expected to provide a final report on the project within two months of completion of the project. The outcomes described in the application form will provide the basis for measuring the project's success.
33. Any unspent funds will be recouped at the end of the funding period. Please return completed reports to global@waikato.ac.nz and Global-Partnerships@newcastle.edu.au
34. Project leads are expected to provide information on outcomes beyond the project report on an annual basis. Lead applicants will be contacted to provide the update. This might be in an email, post project meeting or survey.
35. Individuals will not be able to participate in applications for future rounds of funding if they have an outstanding report from a previously funded project.

Engagement

36. Successful awardees are expected to communicate openly and transparently with internal partners at Newcastle and Waikato. This might include a mid-project meeting, and they may be asked to present on their collaboration to an internal or external audience.
37. All awardees, lead applicants or project team members, are expected to collaborate with internal partners at Newcastle and Waikato to support communications and marketing activities related to the Seed Fund.
38. Any publications/presentations arising from activities supported by the Fund should include an acknowledgement of the funding. for example, *"This publication/presentation is supported in part by the Partnership Seed Fund between The University of Newcastle and The University of Waikato"*.

APPENDIX ONE: ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible	NOT eligible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable transport, accommodation, subsistence, visa costs, medical and insurance for travel to partner institution • Research materials • Analytical costs • Fieldwork/data collection • Essential, well justified student/casual staff costs to support research activity provided those individuals are not already funded via other means • Reasonable non-international travel costs including accommodation and subsistence • Software access (for collaborative projects/benefit) • Costs associated with organising joint events/workshops at partner • Costs associated with appropriate cultural support • Translation costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff / PhD student salary or time already funded through other means. • Overheads • Capital expenditure • Conference attendance fees • Open access costs • Indirect cost recoveries

APPENDIX TWO: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Criteria	What are we looking for?	Score out of
<i>Innovation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project has the potential to generate novel ideas, theories, interpretations, systems, approaches or fresh perspectives on a problem or process Project goes beyond 'business as usual' and/or fosters a new interdisciplinary team or collaboration The project team has the skills and competencies to maximise success of the project. ECRs and PhD candidates included in the project team 	30
<i>Excellence and impact</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust project proposal with clearly articulated aims and methods. Clearly defined deliverables/outcomes, including a pathway to external funding opportunities. Aligned with partnership priorities, and respective institutional strategic priorities. Potential for long-term benefits or the ability to be scaled up, expanded, replicated, or applied to different contexts in the future 	30
<i>Partnership impact</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust project team drawing on relevant experience/expertise from each institution. Strength of connection established to date (e.g., clear that it's a joint application with shared understanding, vision, and commitment from both sides) The project is likely to strengthen the connectivity and relationship between University of Waikato and University of Newcastle 	20
<i>Reputation building / enhancement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project outcomes will enhance the internal and external reputation of the partnership/Universities (e.g., enhanced research reputation, increased visibility/publicity, stakeholder or industry engagement etc.) 	20