



Bob Dykes Chair of Advanced Artificial Intelligence
School of Engineering and Computer Science
Victoria University of Wellington
Wellington, New Zealand

THE SEARCH

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, one of Aotearoa New Zealand’s most prestigious and research-intensive universities, invites applications and nominations for the Bob Dykes Chair in Advanced Artificial Intelligence. This is an exciting opportunity for a visionary leader and an Advanced AI expert - whether emerging or established - to contribute to the forefront of AI innovation, research, and policy at a time of national momentum and global transformation.

Generously supported by alumnus, finance and technology expert Bob Dykes, this first-of-its-kind endowed Chair represents a bold investment in the future of Generative and Advanced AI. Reporting to the Tumuaki - Head of School, the successful candidate will join Te Kura Mātai Pūkaha, Pūrōrohiko - the [School of Engineering and Computer Science](#), home to New Zealand’s first undergraduate major and master’s degree in AI, and will help shape the University’s growing AI ecosystem.

This appointment comes at a pivotal moment, coinciding with the launch of New Zealand’s [first national AI Strategy](#) and a surge in government investment in science, innovation, and technology of up to \$1.2B in annual funding . Within three years, the Chair is expected to contribute to cutting-edge research in Advanced, particularly Generative AI, with real-world impact. The Chair will help mentor the next generation of AI researchers and innovators, foster a vibrant ecosystem of students, staff, startups, and industry partners to drive innovation and commercial impact. The Chair will also contribute to shaping New Zealand’s national dialogue and policy on AI, ensuring that the country’s approach to AI development is ethical, inclusive, and globally informed. Working closely with leaders in the School of Engineering and Computer Science and Te Whiri Kawe - the [Centre for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence](#), the Chair will facilitate interdisciplinary research for social and economic impact, strengthen institutional connectivity across the AI initiatives, and help position both the University and New Zealand as global leaders in the responsible development of AI technologies.

This is more than an academic role - it's a strategic opportunity to advance New Zealand's capacity in AI. The ideal candidate could bring a strong scholarly record in Generative and other forms of Advanced AI, experience in both academia and/or industry, a passion for inspiring students, a talent for interdisciplinary engagement, and a collaborative vision for AI's role in shaping a better future.

Victoria University of Wellington has retained Isaacson, Miller, an international executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this document.

ABOUT TE HERENGA WAKA—VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Founded in 1897, Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington is one of New Zealand's oldest and most distinguished universities. With campuses located throughout the vibrant capital city, the University fosters creativity, innovation, and curiosity in a diverse community of more than 22,000 students, including international students from over 120 countries.

Situated at the geographic and political heart of Aotearoa New Zealand, the University plays a vital role in cultivating intellectual capital and driving innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable economic growth. As one of Wellington's two largest employers, VUW contributes more than \$1 billion annually to the regional economy and is deeply embedded in the cultural and economic fabric of the city.

The University has six main faculties: Architecture and Design Innovation; Business and Government; Education, Health, and Psychological Sciences; Humanities and Social Sciences; Law; and Science and Engineering. Additionally, the Faculty of Graduate Research facilitates postgraduate research at the University. Each faculty comprises a number of schools, many of which are closely aligned with the University's extensive network of research centres and institutes.

With approximately 2,200 full-time equivalent staff, more than 1,000 of whom are involved in teaching and research, VUW is renowned for its high-quality research and exceptional teaching. It consistently ranks among the top 300 of the world's universities in the *QS World University Rankings* and is placed in the top 2 percent of universities globally.

For more than a century, the University has cultivated strong international partnerships in both teaching and research, offering high quality programmes of national and international significance. Students are encouraged to acquire, understand, and apply both disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, while gaining a global perspective.

The University's central location across three campuses enables it to maintain close connections with government, business, iwi, the judiciary, public and private research organisations, cultural organisations and resources, other universities and tertiary providers and the international community through the diplomatic corps. Wellington is a vibrant city where learning doesn't stop at the University's doors.

To learn more about the University, visit <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/>

To learn more about the University's structure and the senior leadership team, visit <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/about/governance/structure>

THE EVOLVING CONTEXT OF AI AT VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Victoria University of Wellington has long been at the forefront of digital innovation in Aotearoa New Zealand. The School of Engineering and Computer Science played a foundational role in shaping the country's internet infrastructure. It's home to the creation of New Zealand's first website by student Nat Torkington and the efforts of Professor John Hine, who was instrumental in securing the nation's first undersea internet cable through a partnership with NASA. The inter-university network that Professor Hine developed evolved into the backbone of New Zealand's internet infrastructure until commercial services took over in 1996.

Building on this legacy, the University has continued to lead in AI education and research. It launched New Zealand's first Master of Artificial Intelligence in 2021, and in 2022, introduced the country's first undergraduate major in Artificial Intelligence to meet the growing global demand for AI expertise. In 2023, the University established the Centre for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence (CDSAI), with a vision to drive sustainable research excellence and innovation. The Centre focuses on undertaking advanced fundamental research, innovative methods and techniques for key applications, and leading knowledge advancement with significant impacts to the economy, environment, health, and social aspects. In addition to its research mission, the Centre is committed to inclusive talent development, offering scholarships and internships for Māori students and training opportunities for early career researchers.

Today, the Centre is home to over 30 core academics, eight postdoctoral researchers, and more than 60 postgraduate researchers. Among them are four Fellows of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), two Fellows of the Royal Society of New Zealand, and three Fellows of Engineering New Zealand. The Centre continues to lead in foundational AI and data science research and interdisciplinary applications in areas such as primary industries, climate change, (bio)medical/health, high-tech, and high-value manufacturing, as well as ethics and public policies.

Through its close association with CDSAI, the School of Engineering and Computer Science offers a comprehensive suite of academic programmes in AI, including a Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence, which is the only undergraduate major in AI in New Zealand, a Bachelor of Engineering with Honours in Electrical and Electronic Engineering with a specialisation on AI and Machine Learning, and also the New Zealand's first postgraduate AI qualification including Master of AI, a Postgraduate Diploma in Science in AI and Postgraduate Certificate in AI. Since the 1990s, the School has also provided advanced research degrees such as Master of Science and PhD in Artificial Intelligence. Together, these initiatives reflect the University's evolving and expanding leadership in AI, both nationally and globally.

ROLE OF THE BOB DYKES CHAIR OF ADVANCED ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

As New Zealand stands at a pivotal moment in the global AI revolution, Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington is poised to further cement its leadership in the field with the establishment of the Bob Dykes Chair of Advanced Artificial Intelligence. The Chair will contribute across the following key areas over the next three years:

Advancing New Zealand's Capacity in AI

- Canvass training materials and methods from colleagues around the world to support the development of Advanced AI knowledge in New Zealand
- Contribute to the growth of the University's AI programme by advancing the use, development, and advancement of novel Advanced AI models and transformative Multimodal AI algorithms in industry
- Help train a cohort of excellent postgraduate researchers in AI, with a focus on Advanced AI expertise

Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research for Social Impact

- Champion or contribute to interdisciplinary research that explore how AI can improve New Zealand's services and governance
- Support initiatives that address the socially disruptive effects of AI, including its potential impact on employment

Strengthening Institutional Leadership and Visibility

- Collaborate with colleagues across the Centre for Data Science and AI (CDSAI) to foster cohesion and connectivity with existing areas of AI strengths
- Contribute to shaping the future research directions of CDSAI by working closely with academic leaders, drawing on the collective expertise and capabilities of both the School and the Centre
- Support efforts to raise the external visibility of CDSAI and foster meaningful engagement with students, communities, and stakeholders through joint initiatives and outreach

Driving Innovation and Commercial Impact

- Contribute to the development of new intellectual property in the field of Advanced AI
- Strengthen university-wide collaborations between academic researchers, Wellington UniVentures, international experts and local entrepreneurs to accelerate commercial opportunities in AI
- Help develop frameworks to measure and track the value and impact generated by AI innovations

Shaping New Zealand's Dialogue and Policy around AI

- Facilitate discussions about Advanced AI use, impacts, and oversight in New Zealand

- Help assemble a multidisciplinary group of expert advisors from government, university, industry, and user communities to inform New Zealand’s AI strategies
- Collaborate with the Artificial Intelligence Forum of New Zealand and other university groups to provide expert input into AI-related policy and regulation development

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate for the Bob Dykes Chair in Advanced Artificial Intelligence will bring a combination of visionary thinking, academic or applied excellence, and a collaborative spirit. While some qualifications may reflect traditional academic pathways, applicants with significant experience in industry or applied research are strongly encouraged to apply. Candidates could bring many of the following:

- A master’s degree in a relevant field is required, a completed PhD is desirable.
- A strong and active record of scholarly research in generative and other forms of advanced AI, demonstrated through publications in leading national and international journals or with reputable academic presses (or where appropriate, extensive relevant industry/professional experience).
- Experience contributing to academic leadership in teaching and research, such as developing teaching programmes, leading collaborative research projects, or launching innovative initiatives that encourage or enhance student learning.
- Demonstrated evidence of contributing to the strategic goals of an organisation
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to mentor, collaborate with, and lead colleagues from a diverse range of backgrounds
- Experience bringing together diverse stakeholders around a shared vision to accelerate innovation and impact
- A track record of attracting competitive national and/or international level funding for research and other activities

LIVING AND WORKING IN WELLINGTON

Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand’s capital city, is a vibrant hub of culture, creativity, and opportunity. Known for its thriving arts scene, award-winning restaurants, craft breweries, coffee roasteries, and nearby wineries, the city offers an exceptional quality of life. Everything from natural beauty to career opportunities, cultural experiences, and family-friendly amenities is within easy reach.

As the home of government and many international businesses, Wellington plays a central role in the country’s political, economic, and creative life. It is also a key centre for science, innovation, and the arts, making it an ideal location for professionals across a wide range of industries. Tourism, film, and digital media are major contributors to the local economy, and the city consistently boasts the highest average salaries in New Zealand.

With a population of nearly half a million across the greater Wellington region - including the cities of Porirua, Upper Hutt, Lower Hutt, and Wellington itself - the city is both diverse and welcoming. Nearly a third of residents were born overseas, contributing to a rich multicultural environment.

Wellington is well-connected, with an established public transport network and an international airport offering easy access to the rest of New Zealand and the world. The city is also home to Te Papa, the country's national museum, as well as a wide range of galleries, theatres, and live music venues. Outdoor enthusiasts will find beaches, hiking trails, regional parks, and natural reserves all within close proximity.

To learn more about life in Wellington, visit <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/about/working-here>

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/victoria-university-wellington/bob-dykes-chair-advanced-ai>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Julie Filizetti, Phuong Ta, and Gabi Harrington
Isaacson, Miller

APPENDIX I - STRATEGIC PLAN

Te Herenga Waka, He Herenga Tāngata, He Herenga Kaupapa—the university for a better world.

Te whakakitenga—Our vision

The University's excellence is defined by inspirational teaching, outstanding research and deep engagement that mobilises understanding and action for a better world.

Te koromakinga—Our mission

We draw on our whakapapa, knowledge, and place to shape a better future together.

Ngā uara—Our values

- Kaitiakitanga - we have a duty as guardians to protect and nurture the environment and people entrusted to our care.
- Manaakitanga - we are welcoming and generous and operate in ways that enhance the mana of our staff and students.
- Whanaungatanga - we grow meaningful and long-lasting relationships that benefit our university communities and wider society.
- Akoranga - we value the experience that students and staff bring to the University and recognise that greater understanding grows out of shared learning.
- Whai mātauranga - we nurture intellectual curiosity that pushes the boundaries of knowledge and integrates diverse viewpoints to enhance the world around us.

Ngā whāinga matua—Our strategic priorities

- Connection - We value and understand our diversity.
- Collaboration - We value and use our strengths together.
- Community - We create value for our whole society.

To learn more about the strategic plan, visit <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/about/governance/strategic-plan>