

# Financial Authority Policy



**Responsibility for policy:** Capital and Finance Committee

**Approving authority:** Council

**Last reviewed:** December 2023

**Next review:** December 2028

## Application

1. This policy applies to all staff of the University of Waikato.

## Purpose

2. The purpose of this policy is to set out:
  - a. the financial authority limits that apply to single transactions for particular categories of staff, and
  - b. responsibilities and accountabilities in relation to financial authorities.

## Scope

3. This policy applies to the purchase and procurement of goods and services, and the approval of research, education and commercial contracts. It does not apply to academic agreements or staff appointments. Financial authorities related to academic agreements are set out in individual academic agreements. All staff appointments are subject to the approval of the Director of People and Capability.

## Definitions

4. In this policy:

**budget holder** means a person who is responsible for the management of an allocated budget

**business-as-usual compliance payment** means a payment that is required by law or is necessary to the day-to-day operations of the University, such as payroll, tax, and utilities

**capital asset** means an asset that has been capitalised in accordance with the [Capital Asset Policy](#)

**commercial contract** means a contract where the University is contracted to undertake (or receive) commercial activities for (or from) another party

**education contract** means a contract where the University is contracted to undertake (or receive) education or training services for (or from) another party

**research contract** means a contract where the University is contracted to undertake (or receive) research for (or from) another party

**tender** means the process before a purchase, involving the evaluation and selection of a supplier based on the supplier's written offer to supply goods and/or services at an agreed price

**transaction** means a payment or a commitment to make a payment from one person or account to another (e.g. purchase order)

**whole-of-life cost** means the total cost, including purchase cost, operating cost, maintenance cost and residual value (where applicable) for the life of a contractual term.

## **Related documents**

5. The following documents set out further information relevant to this policy:

- [Capital Asset Policy](#)
- [Desktop Computer Standards](#)
- [Financial Ethics Policy](#)
- [Fixed Asset Guidelines](#)
- [Governance and Management Guidelines](#)
- [Independent Contractor Policy](#)
- [Koha, Donations and Sponsorship Policy](#)
- [Procurement Policy](#)
- [Purchasing and Sensitive Expenditure Policy](#)
- [Travel Policy](#)
- [Treasury Management Policy](#)

## **Legislative and policy framework**

6. This policy takes account of the [Education and Training Act 2020](#), which includes provisions for Council to delegate its functions and powers and for those functions and powers to be sub-delegated (sections [283\(1\)](#) and [285\(1\)](#)), and Council's delegations under its [Governance and Management Guidelines](#).

## **Financial authority of the Vice-Chancellor**

7. The maximum financial authority of the Vice-Chancellor for a single transaction is \$5 million; any single transaction exceeding \$5 million is subject to the prior approval of the Council.
8. The maximum financial authority of the Vice-Chancellor for approving research, education or commercial contracts is \$5 million; any contract exceeding \$5 million is subject to the prior approval of the Council.
9. The Vice-Chancellor must report to the Capital and Finance Committee and Council any single financial transaction of \$1 million or more, unless it is a business-as-usual compliance payment (see clause 18 of this policy).
10. For any budget category (relevant categories are as set out in the Statement of Financial Performance), the Vice-Chancellor may approve additional operating expenditure of up to 5% or \$1 million more than the original operating budget, whichever is larger, provided that they are confident that the financial objectives set by Council will be attained (including achievement of budgeted surplus); the Vice-Chancellor must report such approvals to the next meeting of the Capital and Finance Committee.

## **Financial authorities of budget holders**

11. The Vice-Chancellor delegates to budget holders financial authorities and responsibilities for managing their respective budget allocations.
12. The Vice-Chancellor delegates to budget holders financial authorities for single transactions to the limits set out in [Appendix 1](#) of this policy.
13. The financial authority limits take into consideration the total whole-of-life cost of a commitment, including purchase cost, operating cost, maintenance cost and residual value (where applicable) over the whole of the period of the commitment.
14. The limits listed in [Appendix 1](#) of this policy apply to whole single transactions; transactions must not be split to fit within the maximum authority.

15. Budget holders may only authorise transactions for areas where they are the budget holder.
16. The delegations set out in this policy are standing delegations made in relation to positions within the University, rather than named individuals; if an individual moves from one position within the University to another, the delegations relating to the initial position no longer apply to that individual.
17. Budget holders may, with the approval of their line manager and the Chief Financial Officer, temporarily sub-delegate their financial authorities to another staff member, e.g. to manage approvals in times of extended periods of leave.
18. The Vice-Chancellor may review, from time to time, the limits set out in [Appendix 1](#) and/or [Appendix 3](#) of this policy; any changes to [Appendix 1](#) and/or [Appendix 3](#) approved by the Vice-Chancellor must be reported to the Capital and Finance Committee and Council.
19. The Vice-Chancellor delegates financial authorities for business-as-usual compliance payments as set out in [Appendix 2](#) of this policy.
20. The Vice-Chancellor may at any time restrict or revoke the financial authority of any staff member or the application of the financial authorities set out in [Appendix 1](#), [Appendix 2](#) and/or [Appendix 3](#) of this policy with respect to any particular staff member, category of staff or transaction type.
21. Budget holders must not commit University funds beyond their specified annual budget allocation unless the Chief Financial Officer has first approved the commitment in writing.
22. Budget holders with a separate capital budget must not transfer allocations from a capital to an operational budget, or vice versa.

### **Responsibilities of line managers**

23. Line managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff comply with this policy.
24. Line managers must report any breaches of this policy to the Chief Financial Officer.

### **Approval of financial commitments**

25. This policy establishes the delegated authority limits of a member of staff for a single transaction; the procurement process or purchase must also adhere to the [Procurement Policy](#) and/or [Purchasing and Sensitive Expenditure Policy](#).
26. Staff must not commit University funds in excess of \$100,000 (whole of life) beyond the current budget year unless:
  - a. in the case of commitments of up to three years, the commitment has first been approved by the Chief Operating Officer or the Chief Financial Officer; or
  - b. in the case of commitments of between three and 10 years, the commitment has first been approved by the Vice-Chancellor; or
  - c. in the case of commitments of 10 years or more, the commitment has first been approved by Council.
27. Any financial commitment covering a period longer than five years must be reported to the Capital and Finance Committee and Council.
28. Any single operating expenditure commitment more than 5% higher than the operating budget for the relevant category (relevant categories are set out in the Statement of Financial Performance), unless covered by corresponding additional

income, is subject to the prior approval of the Capital and Finance Committee and must be reported to the following meeting of Council.

### **Research, education and commercial contracts**

29. Research, education and commercial contracts, where the University has been engaged to provide services or deliver outcomes, require delegated authority to approve the commitment for the University to deliver the contract.
30. The Vice-Chancellor delegates to budget holders financial authorities for the approval of research, education or commercial contracts to the limits set out in [Appendix 3](#) of this policy.
31. The commitment for single transactions within such contracts are subject to the delegated authority limits set out in [Appendix 1](#) of this policy.

### **Disposal of capital assets**

32. University capital assets must not be disposed of without the prior approval of the Chief Financial Officer.

### **Debt write-off**

33. The Chief Financial Officer has authority to write-off any single financial debt up to and including \$25,000.
34. The Capital and Finance Committee has authority to write-off any single financial debt of more than \$25,000.
35. The Chief Financial Officer must report to the Capital and Finance Committee all decisions to write-off financial debt.
36. The Chief Financial Officer has authority to approve credit notes of any value, and the Associate Director of Financial Operations has authority to correct invoices raised incorrectly.

### **Capital expenditure**

37. The Chief Financial Officer must report to the Capital and Finance Committee any single item of capital expenditure valued at more than \$200,000.

### **Monitoring of financial authorities**

38. The Chief Financial Officer must conduct annual reviews of all financial authorities to ensure that delegations are appropriately and accurately recorded, and make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor as necessary.

### **Responsibility for monitoring compliance**

39. The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy, and is required to report instances of non-compliance to the Capital and Finance Committee.
40. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action under the [Staff Code of Conduct](#).

## Appendix 1

| <b>Approval Level</b> | <b>Budget Holders</b>   | <b>Maximum financial authority for a single transaction within approved budget (NZ\$, GST exclusive)</b> | <b>Includes capital expenditure within area's approved capital budget</b> |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| Level A               | Chief Operating Officer   | \$3,000,000  | Yes   |
| Level B               | Chief Financial Officer   | \$500,000  | Yes   |
| Level C               | Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Assistant Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors or equivalent         | \$250,000  | Yes   |
| Level D               | Deans, Heads of School, Directors or equivalent   | \$100,000  | Yes   |
| Level E               | Deputy Directors, Associate Directors, Associate Deans, Deputy Deans or equivalent              | \$50,000   | Yes   |
| Level F               | Managers (School, Business, Technical, Administrative), Unit Directors or equivalent            | \$15,000   | Yes   |
| Level G               | Business/Administrative Managers  | \$10,000   | No  |
| Level H               | Cost Centre Alternates (Acting)   | \$10,000   | No  |
| Level I               | Administrative Managers   | \$5,000  | No  |
| Level J               | Administrative Staff/Personal Assistants with a significant range of financial responsibilities | \$3,000  | No  |
| Level K               | Administrative Staff/Personal Assistants with a range of financial responsibilities             | \$2,000  | No  |
| Level L               | Administrative Staff/Personal Assistants with moderate financial responsibilities               | \$1,000  | No  |
| Level M               | Secretaries/Personal Assistants with limited financial responsibilities                         | \$250  | No  |
| Level P               | PCard authorities only (no financial delegation for Unimarket)                                  | \$250  | No  |

## Appendix 2

### Compliance Payment

Payroll Transactions  
IRD – PAYE  
IRD – GST  
IRD – FBT  
WINZ and StudyLink Reimbursements  
Student Fee Waivers/Refunds

Library Fine Waivers  
Student Discipline Fee Refunds

Utility Transactions –  
Electricity/Gas/Water/Rates/Rubbish  
collection etc.

IT/Communications transactions –  
Internet, Phone etc.

Halls of Residence Catering Payments

### Delegated Authority

Payroll Manager  
Payroll Manager  
Financial Controller  
Financial Controller  
Financial Controller  
Director of Student Systems and  
Administration  
Financial Controller  
University Librarian  
Chairperson, Student Discipline  
Committee  
Chairperson, Student Discipline Appeals  
Committee  
Director of Property Services  
Chief Information Officer  
Associate Director, Student  
Accommodation

## Appendix 3

### Budget Holder

Chief Operating Officer  
Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Assistant Vice-  
Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors or  
equivalent  
Director Research and Enterprise  
Deans, Heads of School, Directors or  
equivalent  
Deputy Directors, Associate Directors,  
Associate Deans, Deputy Deans or  
equivalent

### Contract Limit

\$3,000,000  
\$250,000  
\$250,000  
\$100,000  
\$50,000