

# Postgraduate Pacific Scholarship - Master of Genetic Counselling (2 years)

Please note that the successful candidate will also need to apply and be accepted to the Master of Genetic Counselling program at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

## Background

Genetic counsellors are postgraduate trained allied health professionals who support people and families impacted by, or at increased risk of having a health condition with a genetic basis. They integrate clinical genomic knowledge, health communication, and counselling skills to identify and meet clinical, informational, and psychological needs and promote informed decision-making. Genetic counsellors work across all areas of health, in clinical care, research, academia, education, policy, industry and pathology. In clinical practice, they provide comprehensive, client-centred, multigenerational care for families across a range of multidisciplinary healthcare settings. For more information, please see <https://asgc.org.au/>. Recent advances in genetic and genomic testing have enormous potential to guide the management of inherited diseases and assist with early diagnosis and targeted treatment, resulting in many new opportunities for genetic counsellors (from <https://www.uts.edu.au/>).

In New Zealand, Māori and Pacific are under-represented within the health profession roles. Underrepresentation of minorities in the health professions has been identified as one of the barriers to achieving equitable healthcare; internationally as well as in New Zealand (Curtis et al., 2012; LaVeist et al., 2003). To our understanding, there are likely no Pacific genetic counsellors currently working in New Zealand. Lack of awareness of the existence of the genetic counselling profession, combined with difficult access to training are the likely contributing factors.

To address the underrepresentation of Pacific health professionals in the New Zealand genetic counselling workforce, we are offering a scholarship to support a Pacific student to complete a Master in Genetic Counselling study (remote) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

## References

**Curtis, E.,** Wikaire, E., Stokes, K., & Reid, P. (2012). Addressing indigenous health workforce inequities: A literature review exploring "best" practice for recruitment into tertiary health programmes. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 11(1), 13.

**LaVeist, T. A.,** Nuru-Jeter, A., & Jones, K. E. (2003). The Association of Doctor-Patient Race Concordance with Health Services Utilization. *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 24(3/4), 312–323.

## Pacific Master of Genetic Counselling Scholarship

The purpose of this scholarship is to provide direct support for a **Pacific student to qualify as a genetic counsellor**. In New Zealand, genetic counsellors are registered through the Human Genetics Society of Australasia. The nearest place where New Zealanders can study to become registered genetic counsellors is the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). The program is accredited by the Human Genetics Society of Australasia (HGSA). **The study (2 years) can be done remotely with two 1-week visits to Sydney per year.** Please click [here](#) for more information on UTS.

## What does the scholarship cover

- UTS study fees (\$94,000)
- Four 1-week on-site study trips to Sydney (\$8,000)
- Travel and accommodation costs related to placements (to be determined, depending on location)

## Master of Genetic Counselling (University of Technology Sydney)

### Duration of the study and time required to attend in person (Sydney)

- The Master of Genetic Counselling is a **two-year full-time course** offered as a blended learning program with **weekly live and online classes** and a one-week block teaching on campus each session. During the two years, you are **required to attend 4x1 week on campus**.
- The course **commences in February 2025** with compulsory attendance at the on-campus block teaching week during Professional Skills Week. The course **ends in November 2026**.

### Placements

Students will undertake the following placements and NZ students are encouraged to do at least one in Australia. The placements are:

- 1 week Autumn semester year 1
- 2 weeks Spring semester year 1
- 4 weeks Autumn semester year 2
- 4 weeks Spring semester year 2

### Involvement with Pūtahi Manawa

- The scholarship is funded by Pūtahi Manawa | Healthy Hearts for Aotearoa New Zealand which is a Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE) funded by the Tertiary Education Commission. For more information, please see <https://www.putahimanawa.ac.nz/>.
- The scholarship has been initiated by Pūtahi Manawa Integrated Research Modules project: 'Ō tātou ngākau, ō tātou ira, ō tatou korero / Our heart, our genes, our story'. Please see [Pūtahi Manawa Integrated Research Modules](#) for more information.
- You will be part of and be encouraged to participate in Pūtahi Manawa whānau/aiga through Early Career Researcher Rōpū (see: [Pūtahi Manawa ECR](#)) and other events organised by Pūtahi Manawa. This will be a good way of finding formal and informal mentorships as well as connecting to the New Zealand community of Pacific and Māori health professionals and researchers.
- As part of your study, you will be expected to conduct a **thesis project with the project 'Our heart, our genes, our story'**, starting in July 2025 and ending in June 2026. The project will be built around Pacific aiga affected by inherited cardiovascular disease and their perspectives and experiences with genetic testing in New Zealand.

### Eligibility:

- You must be of Indigenous Pacific descent and understand Pacific cultural practices and protocols.
- Study must be undertaken full-time, but you are allowed to have a part-time job. The program coordinators advise **paid work to be limited to 2 days during the semester** to allow enough time needed for the study requirements during term time. There is a possibility of part-time (2 days per week) work with the Pūtahi Manawa IRM project 'Our heart, our genes, our story' working with Pacific aiga affected by heart diseases.
- To be eligible for domestic fees at UTS, you must be a New Zealand or Australian Citizen or Australian permanent resident.
- All proposals should be aligned with Pūtahi Manawa CoRE principles (see [PM Core Values](#)).
- You are motivated to improve health outcomes for Pacific aiga affected by inherited cardiovascular diseases.
- In addition to applying for the Pūtahi Manawa scholarship, you will also need to **apply and be accepted to the Master of Genetic Counselling program at UTS**. We will liaise with UTS

admissions team and both assessments will take place in parallel. You will only be offered the scholarship if you are also accepted to the Master of Genetic Counselling Program at UTS. If you are accepted to the Master of Genetic Counselling program but have not been successful in receiving the Pūtahi Manawa scholarship, we can help you network and identify other sources of funding you could apply for in the next year as well as help you network and identify alternative pathways for you.

## Requirements for UTS Master of Genetic Counselling

- Bachelor s degree in a cognate discipline
- Human genetics subject (to second or third year undergraduate level, or equivalent) within the last 10 years
- Provide at least one reference as evidence of relevant voluntary or paid work experience in a caring role. Referees may include the supervisor of your caring role, teacher, lecturer, academic, employer or supervisor of paid work or other relevant person.
- Experiences of caring roles refer to opportunities where you have provided support to people who may be vulnerable, in need or in distress. Opportunities for experience in a caring role may be found working with: Non-profit or community organisations; patient support organisations; lifeline and other telephone crisis or peer support lines; groups that work with people with disabilities, refugees, homeless or children with special needs; or caring for relatives.
- Applicants will submit a personal statement of up to 1000 words
- Please see the UTS Handbook for admission requirements details, a link to the 'Prerequisite Assessment Table' and a link to the application portal.
- You can register to attend the UTS information session on July 24, 2024:  
<https://www.uts.edu.au/about/graduate-school-health/events>

## How to apply

If you are interested in applying, please email the PI of the Pūtahi Manawa project Our Heart, Our Genes, Our Story Dr. Polona Le Quesne Stabej ([p.stabej@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:p.stabej@auckland.ac.nz)). Polona and the team will be happy to tell you more about the study as well as the thesis project and can also put you in touch with recent UTS students and genetic counsellors. We appreciate genetic counselling is not a well-known profession and you are encouraged to come and talk to us to find out more.

- For UTS prerequisite checking – submit the [Prerequisite Assessment Table](#) to [GSH.future@uts.edu.au](mailto:GSH.future@uts.edu.au).
- Please send the completed Pūtahi Manawa application form and NZ CV to: Dr Polona Le Quesne Stabej: [p.stabej@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:p.stabej@auckland.ac.nz) by August 31st, 2024.
- Please submit your UTS application via the portal: **How-apply**; the application page will open on August 1, 2024; please contact Ms Lucinda Freeman at [Lucinda.Freeman@uts.edu.au](mailto:Lucinda.Freeman@uts.edu.au) if you have any questions about the UTS application.
- You are welcome to submit cultural and/or community referees to accompany your application.

## Key dates

Pūtahi Manawa Masters of Genetic Counselling Scholarship Applications open	Now
Prerequisite table: fill out and submit to UTS	Now-July 31 2024
University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Applications open	1 August 2024
Pūtahi Manawa Master of Genetic Counselling Scholarship and (UTS) Applications close	<b>31 August 2024*</b>
Interviews (UTS and Pūtahi Manawa)	September 2024
Results announced	October-November 2024

\*Please note this is earlier than the deadline on the UTS site (to allow sufficient time to review Pūtahi Manawa and UTS applications in parallel).

UTS study starts	February 2025
UTS study ends	1 November 2026