

Position Description

Date: October 2026

Ref: 2089

Position | Tūranga: Internship – Plantain Research

Responsible to Tō kaiwhakahaere:	tba
Group Tari:	Resilient Agriculture
Function Wāhanga:	Resilient Agriculture
Team Tīma:	Plant-Microbe Interactions
Location Wāhi:	Grasslands, Palmerston North or Ruakura, Hamilton
Employment Type Momo Mahi:	Fixed Term – 12 weeks
Korn Ferry Grade Taumata Korn Ferry:	12

Organisational context

The Bioeconomy Science Institute Maiangi Taiao is New Zealand's newest public research organisation, formed through the merger of AgResearch, Plant & Food Research, Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research, Scion, and the New Zealand Food Innovation Network. Our purpose is to drive innovation and commercial outcomes in the bioeconomy, using research and technology to support enduring economic growth and resilience, a healthy environment and beneficial social outcomes for New Zealand. We pursue opportunities to lift innovation, commercial outcomes, and adoption of advanced technology to drive economic growth across New Zealand. Through world-leading science, we drive innovation across agriculture, horticulture, forestry, aquaculture, biotechnology, and manufacturing. We protect and enhance ecosystems, strengthen biosecurity and climate resilience, and develop cutting-edge bio-based products and technologies.

We honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and embed te ao Māori throughout our transformation journey. As we come together, we are committed to learning and growing together through inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsiveness ways of working. All roles contribute, in ways relevant to their work, to giving effect to our Te Tiriti commitments through partnership, participation, protection and equity.

Role purpose | Te Take o te Tūranga

This internship will contribute to research exploring the role and value of plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). The Institute has identified two potential research projects, and the successful applicant will be assigned to the project that best aligns with their skills, experience, and interests, while also meeting project requirements.

The preferred project will explore the significance of plantain in te ao Māori, including its role as a rongoā species and its relevance to future agricultural systems. An alternative project will investigate plant-microbiome interactions and the recruitment of microbial communities associated with plantain.

Accountabilities | Ngā whakaritenga

The successful student will contribute to one of two approved plantain-focused research projects, with responsibilities including:

Project Option 1: Exploring the Importance of Plantain in Te Ao Māori (A social science project)

- Undertaking literature reviews and background research relating to plantain, rongoā, and mātauranga Māori.
- Supporting interviews, engagement activities, and information gathering with relevant stakeholders and communities.
- Collecting, organising, and analysing qualitative information and research findings.
- Supporting the development of stories, presentations, reports, or other communication outputs.
- Working collaboratively with researchers to deliver project objectives.

Project B: Investigating the Recruitment of Microbiomes in Plantain (A microbiology lab-based project)

- Assisting with microbiology laboratory activities and experimental procedures.
- Supporting in vitro bioassays involving microorganisms.
- Processing plant samples for metabolite quantification and analysis.
- Contributing to plant pot trials, including plant maintenance and sample collection.
- Assisting with the collection, management, and analysis of research data.

Responsibilities Applicable to All Projects

- Maintain accurate and organised research records.
- Work effectively with scientists, technicians, and project collaborators.
- Participate in team meetings and project discussions.
- Communicate project findings effectively in written and verbal formats.
- Contribute positively to a collaborative and inclusive research environment.

About you | Ō Pūmanawa

We are seeking a motivated student who:

- Is currently enrolled in an undergraduate or postgraduate programme in a relevant discipline, such as Social Science, Māori Studies, Environmental Studies, Agricultural Science, Plant Science, Microbiology, Biology, Chemistry, or a related field.
- Has a strong interest in research and applying academic knowledge to real-world challenges.
- Demonstrates curiosity, initiative, and a willingness to learn.
- Possesses strong organisational skills and attention to detail.
- Has effective written and verbal communication skills.
- Can work independently while also contributing as part of a research team.
- Is able to manage multiple tasks and meet agreed deadlines.

Desirable

Depending on the project assigned, experience or interest in one or more of the following would be advantageous:

- Qualitative research methods, interviewing, stakeholder engagement, or science communication.
- Mātauranga Māori, rongoā, or indigenous knowledge systems.
- Microbiology, plant science, agricultural science, or laboratory-based research.
- Experimental design and data collection.
- Data management and analysis using Excel or similar software.

Information And Records Management | Te Whakahaere | Ngā Mōhiotanga Me Ngā Putu Raraunga

- Ensure that information and records are maintained, created, and disposed of in compliance with relevant statutory, regulatory, and Institute policy requirements, documenting business transactions and activities securely and following established policies and procedures.

Health, Safety, And Wellbeing | Hauora, Haumaru Me Te Oranga

- Contribute to a positive health, safety and wellbeing culture by taking reasonable care for their own health, safety and wellbeing and that of others; complying with legislative requirements, organisational policies and standard operating procedures; reporting hazards, incidents, near misses, and safety observations; and promoting psychological wellbeing through open communication and the early recognition of stress, fatigue, and mental health concerns.

Organisational objectives | Ngā Whāinga Tōpūtanga Katoa

- Actively develops and applies the cultural capability relevant to their role and contributes to giving effect to the organisation's Te Tiriti o Waitangi Framework
- Ensures that all information created or received during your work is managed as per the Institute's Information Management policy. This includes naming, storing, classifying, and ensuring it is available to other employees.
- Takes responsibility to understand and apply Institute policy, processes, systems, and procedures daily.
- Commits to accurate and timely information sharing and recordkeeping as per set organisational standards.
- The accountabilities set out above are not exhaustive. Therefore, it may be necessary for you to undertake other reasonable accountabilities as required, which are within your abilities.