

NGĀ HOE A KUPE PATHFINDER SCHOLARSHIPS



THE STORY OF YOUR IMPACT BEGINS HERE

60

SCHOLARSHIPS
AWARDED SINCE
PROGRAMME
LAUNCH

472

TOTAL
GENEROUS
DONORS

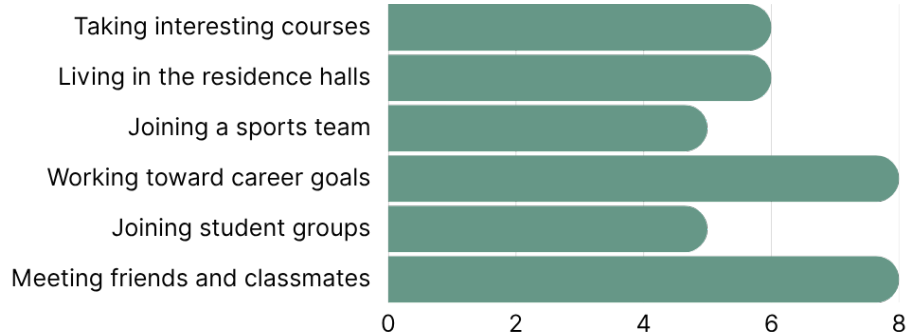
9

SCHOLARSHIPS
AWARDED THIS
YEAR

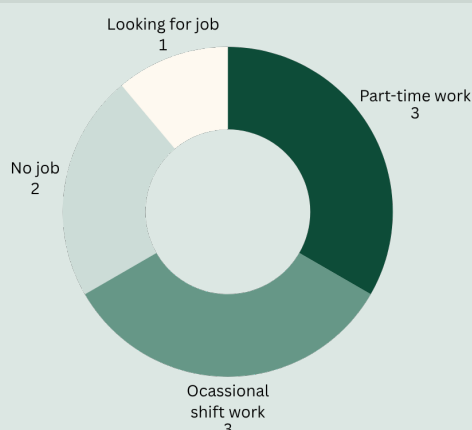
Thanks to your support, talented students who come from under-served backgrounds can now pursue their academic dreams. Your gift doesn't just remove financial barriers—it fuels ambition, nurtures leadership, and opens doors to a bright future.

Your generosity changes lives. Thank you.

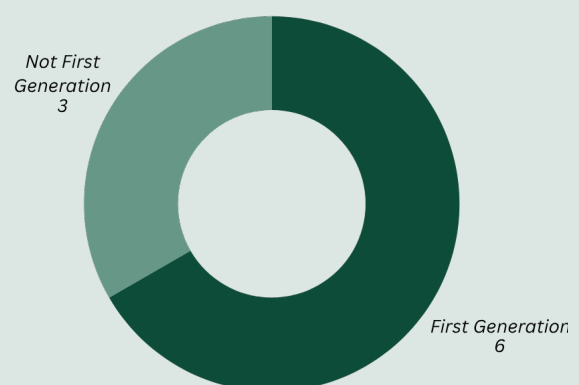
Kupe students voted on what excites them the most about university life. Your gift allows them to have a rich and rewarding university experience free from financial stress.



Two thirds of Kupe recipients still engage in part-time work to support themselves. Your gift ensures that their studies come first and work comes second.



Two thirds of the recipients are the first in their immediate family to attend university. Your gift supports not only the aspirations of each student, but also the dreams of their whānau.



A WORD FROM OUR PROGRAMME MANAGER

The 2026 academic year started off with a bang. In January, a surprise ninth Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship was added to our standard cohort of eight recipients thanks to the communal fundraising efforts of the Kupe Collective. Their generous contribution gave school leaver Koki Pelman the chance to pursue higher education after his dreams of attending university were halted when he wasn't selected for the original cohort. Koki is now making the most of this exceptional opportunity, and I'm inspired by the tenacity of students like him to build a brighter future for themselves and their 'āiga / whānau.

The initial burst of energy and excitement that accompanied the extra scholarship set the tone for the entire first semester. We returned to a more exclusive structure for this year's prep week programme so the Kupe recipients had a better chance at building camaraderie with one another. While integrating their orientation into larger transition programmes had its benefits last year, I can see the difference that this smaller, more personalised approach has made. This year's cohort is one of the most tight-knit since the programme's launch, and their enthusiasm for each other's company overflows in every group gathering.

Part of the reason this cohort is so close stems from their similar academic interests. Many of them are pursuing majors in the fields of commerce or science, which make them keen study partners as they progress through their degrees. But while there are many similarities between the recipients' coursework, their backgrounds and life experiences are more diverse than ever before.

Two students in our 2026 cohort come from refugee backgrounds, a handful are recent immigrants to Aotearoa New Zealand, and most of them are the first in their family to attend university. While we've previously

welcomed recipients from many different countries and walks of life, this current cohort is the most embodied representation of the programme's mission since it began. These students have already overcome immense obstacles in their young lives, but the challenges they've faced have never dulled their vigorous pursuit of education.

While there is much to celebrate, we are also mindful of the obstacles ahead. The Government's removal of the Fees Free scheme will increase the cost of providing each scholarship, and our team is diligently working on sustainable solutions for maintaining a full cohort from our eight partner schools as we navigate the road ahead.

But no matter what changes may be needed in the coming years, our commitment remains unchanged: to ensure that talented young people with the ability, ambition, and determination to thrive at university are not held back by financial barriers. Your generosity continues to make that possible and is more vital for the programme's success than ever before. I hope you feel proud of the lasting difference you are making for these students, their whānau, our University, and the wider community of Aotearoa.

Thank you again for being such an essential part of the Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship programme. None of this would be possible without you.

Gail Ah-Hi

Poutaki Karahipi Taurite
Equity Scholarships Programme Manager



NOTES FROM THE STUDENTS YOU HAVE HELPED

Our 2026 Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship recipients share how your gift has made a difference in their lives.



“Growing up, my family often lived paycheck to paycheck, and there were many sacrifices made just so my siblings and I could have better opportunities. For several years, my parents worked in New Zealand while we stayed in the Philippines with our grandparents. Without the support of the scholarship, I would be constantly worried about tuition fees knowing that my family is already working hard just to support our daily needs. I hope to build a stable and meaningful career as a Chartered Accountant where I can support both myself and my family. This scholarship means more than just financial assistance to me—it’s also a reminder that there are people who believe in students and want to help us succeed. I hope that one day I will also be in a position to help others the same way you have helped me.”

Althea Abejon, Ralph & Eve Seelye Charitable Trust Scholar
Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting



“Without the support of this scholarship, university would place significant financial pressure on both me and my family. Now I have the peace of mind to focus on my studies in Actuarial Science. I’ve always been drawn to mathematics, statistics, and problem-solving, and I’m excited by the opportunity to turn those interests into a meaningful career. I hope to use my degree to build a stable future for myself while also being able to support my family and contribute positively to my community. This scholarship has given me confidence knowing that others believe in my potential and want to support my journey.”

Hayley Wade
Bachelor of Commerce in Actuarial Science



"My family migrated from Cambodia to New Zealand knowing very little English and have always lived in a lower socioeconomic part of the community. In high school I struggled to attend school events that cost money, and I didn't want my parents to bear the financial burden of paying for my university fees. The Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder scholarship has allowed me to attend university without burdening myself with debt or my parents with an extra bill to worry about. Attending university was essentially a pipe dream for me, and I'm so thankful that I get to study here and meet so many amazing people."

Sangha Chea You, O'Connor Family Foundation Scholar
Bachelor of Commerce in Finance



"I'm the youngest of seven siblings and am currently the first daughter in my family to attend university, which is an important achievement for my mother who has always been an advocate for education. Without this scholarship, I would struggle to attend university because transportation to and from Porirua is costly and time-consuming, and it would affect my ability to attend lectures. I hope to build a stable and successful career as a Chartered Forensic Accountant so I can work in a field where I can make a positive impact and create better opportunities for myself. Your support has made a significant difference in my life by alleviating financial pressure that would've prevented me from pursuing my goals."

Serenity Rhind
Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting



"My family arrived in New Zealand in 2016 from Cambodia in search of a better future. Without the scholarship, I likely would have worked towards a trade after college. Luckily, I can pursue higher education without future debts that are a burden to my parents. My mother can't work because of a long-term injury, and while my dad is employed, he's nearing retirement age. I greatly appreciate the amazing opportunity you have provided me. My life, and the life of my family, has taken a completely different path because of this scholarship."

Jure Maich
Bachelor of Science in Biology and Ecology and Biodiversity



"In high school my relationship with my parents was very challenging, so I ended up moving out at the start of year 13. Without the scholarship, I would be working in a blue collar job for 50+ hours a week. Now, I'd like to be a neuroscience researcher in a lab to find cures for neurological diseases and generate new knowledge in the field. I'd like to say a huge thank you to the donors because my dreams would have completely disappeared without the support of this scholarship."

Jordon Lightfoot Salisbury, Eugene Gibney Scholar
Bachelor of Psychology in Brain Sciences & Mental Health



"I come from a supportive family who has always encouraged me to work hard and pursue my goals through education. But a few years ago our house caught fire and everything was lost, which was a major financial set back for my parents. I worked every holiday to help support my family in the aftermath and would likely be working a full-time job right now if it wasn't for the scholarship. Receiving this scholarship has made a meaningful difference in my university journey by easing financial stress and allowing me to focus on my future goals. I truly appreciate the investment you have made in students like me, and I hope to give this kindness back to others in the future."

Koki Pelman

Bachelor of Arts in Pacific Studies, Bachelor of Commerce in Marketing



"I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and spent much of my childhood in Zambia as a refugee before arriving in New Zealand with my mother and younger sister in 2024 after my father passed away. My family has faced many challenges throughout this journey, but these experiences have taught me resilience, adaptability, and the importance of education. The scholarship has given me greater financial security and confidence to pursue a Bachelor of Laws. It allows me to dedicate more time and energy to my education, participate in opportunities that support my academic and personal growth, and work towards my long-term goal of making a positive contribution to my community. This scholarship represents more than just financial assistance—it's a vote of confidence in my potential and future."

Patrick Musonera, Chloe Wright Scholar

Bachelor of Laws



"I'm the eldest of four children and have always tried to be a good role model in our family. Without the support of the scholarship, I would most likely be working a job and struggling to keep up with my studies while balancing life at home. I wouldn't have the opportunity to experience living independently and being surrounded by others who are going through the same experience as me. I hope to become a qualified early childhood teacher who positively contributes to the lives of young children and their families. I'm very honoured to have been selected as a recipient of this scholarship and I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to study at Victoria University."

Matalena Iosefa

Bachelor of Education

From left to right: Kupe recipients Nia Road, Fatima Alsaeed, and Abdirizak Mohamed on graduation day.



Kupe scholarship supports a passion for improving mental health

Nia Road has no doubt about the impact the Kupe scholarship has had on her life: “I wouldn’t be where I am without it. And I don’t think I would be who I am without it either.”

Nia, who graduated in May with a Bachelor of Science in Criminology and Psychology, was inspired to pursue her course of study after watching a family member struggle with mental health. She was also motivated by her own personal journey with mental health challenges, which began when she was in school.

“I was struggling a lot with self-esteem, self-image, and anxiety. I didn’t have the mechanisms to understand what was going on and why I felt the way I did. I was struggling with insomnia quite badly. There was a lot of anxiety about academic achievement and whether I could do it.”

Nia doubts she would have been able to complete her undergraduate degree without the financial support the Kupe scholarship offers. But the holistic wrap-around support included in the scholarship, and the community she found amongst other Kupe recipients, was also transformative.

“It was so helpful to have that cohort of Kupe recipients going on this journey with me. If I was struggling, or didn’t know what I was doing, I knew I could reach out to other people who were going through the same thing.

“I also found it really helpful having friends at uni who believed in me whenever I couldn’t believe in myself.”

She says she found the support of the University's community of Kupe donors hugely motivating.

"I was so unbelievably grateful when I got the call that I was chosen for the scholarship, and it was definitely a self-esteem booster, because it made me realise that I can do it. Knowing people were invested in my future made me more motivated, because I didn't want to let them down. They've clearly seen something in me, so I want to make sure that's not wasted."

Nia's Kupe scholarship was generously supported by the Hoku Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation that supports a range of organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Hoku Foundation also supported Fatima Alsaeed, who graduated in May with a Bachelor of Health in Health Promotion. Fatima says she is truly grateful for the opportunity to become the first person in her family to attend university.

"Coming from a refugee background, pursuing higher education has been especially meaningful to me. I hope to complete a Graduate Diploma in Teaching and become a primary school teacher who supports rangatahi, especially those facing barriers, while making a positive difference in the community."

Hoku's Foundation Manager Clemmie Baker says: "Hoku is very proud of the hard work and dedication shown by Nia and Fatima to achieve their goal of graduating. We look forward to seeing the positive impact we know that they will have."

Fellow Kupe recipient Abdirizak (Zak) Mohamed, who graduated alongside Nia and Fatima, arrived in New Zealand from Somalia with his brother in 2019 and was later reunited with his mother and siblings. He has now graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in Political Science and International Relations.

Zak credits much of his success to his mother's determination and sacrifices in creating new opportunities for her family in New Zealand. He says his achievements are dedicated to her support, resilience, and belief in the importance of education.

While at VUW, he was the treasurer of Vic Without Barriers, a club that helps students from refugee backgrounds find community, navigate uni life, and connect to their home culture. He says that being part of this group was a small way for him to pay forward the support he received from the Kupe scholarship.

"The Kupe scholarship wasn't just about covering my tuition, it gave me the chance to pursue my career dreams without barriers," says Zak. "I wouldn't be the same person without it."

Nia is now studying towards a Master of Science in Forensic Psychology, and says she never would have been able to continue to this level without the scholarship.

"The Kupe scholarship saved my life, essentially. I'm so grateful, because now I get to do something that I'm very passionate about, and I'm excited to wake up every day and be in the field that I'm enjoying. It's a reciprocal thing too, because I'm now hoping I can help other people and do some good with it. I want to use my degree to make a change. It's something that's bigger than just me."

Thank you to the Hoku Foundation for their generous support of the Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship Programme since 2022.

***Thank you
for your support***



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA