

A guide to applying the RMA Capability Framework in practice

1. Introduction

Purpose of using the framework (specific outcomes to be achieved)

- *Understand your individual skills across the framework and your strength/capability gaps.*
- *Identify what your career goals are and what needs to be done to get there.*
- *Gauge what areas of RMA interest you, and what the requirements for your future career might be.*
- *(For the manager) Establish development pathways that are tailored to the individual, and the requirements for their current role or movement into a different role.*

Who is the framework for?

For all RMA staff at all levels, or anyone interested in pursuing a career in RMA.

2. What a capability framework is

What is a capability?

Capabilities are the attributes needed to perform effectively in an organisation. They comprise:

- **knowledge** (theoretical or practical understanding of a subject)
- **skills** (proficiencies developed through training, experience or practice) and
- **abilities** (qualities of being able to do something)

What is a capability framework?

The RMA capability framework identifies the core RMA related capabilities that RMA staff use in their everyday roles. Each role and function within the RMA community have different core capabilities and levels of proficiencies mapped to them, helping staff identify what their role should be able to do in order to enable success. Each capability is broken down into behavioural indicators which describe various actions at four proficiency levels.

The capability framework supports you in identifying capabilities aligned to your strengths and those you would like to focus your annual development goal around to grow in your current role, help you achieve your Tupu performance goals, or move into a different role according to your career aspirations.

Building your capability is an ongoing and continuous process.

3. Structure of the framework

What is in the framework?

The framework is made up of 10 capabilities that have been carefully selected as part of a consultation process with interest-holders across the University and the RMA function. These capabilities broadly align to all RMA roles with four proficiency levels relating to experience and role requirements.

Research Engagement and Impact	Researcher Development and Culture	Research Proposal Development	Research Project and Risk Management	Research Policy and Strategy
Research-related engagement: Engage interest-holders to build research impact, exchange knowledge, and create opportunities.	Researcher development: Support the development of research capabilities with effective learning and development programmes and processes.	Funding opportunities: Identify, build, and disseminate research funding opportunities.	Initiation: Negotiate, agree, and set up research projects or initiatives.	Monitoring and reporting: Monitor and report on activities to fulfil statutory and compliance requirements.
Maximising impact: Identify opportunities for, evaluate, and enhance research impact.	Environment and culture: Support and advance the research environment and culture.	Proposal support: Support and develop research proposals.	Projects and initiatives: Manage research projects and initiatives.	Policy and strategy: Contribute to, develop, implement, and uphold research-related policies and strategies.

Proficiency level refers to the degree of skill a person can demonstrate when carrying out their role. Below you can see the 4 proficiency levels of the RMA Capability Framework.

Level descriptions

1. **Foundation:** University professionals at this level have the technical understanding and values which will enable them to thrive in their role. They exhibit a foundational set of skills and aptitudes which enable them to perform clearly defined and less complex tasks that are relevant to this capability and to grow in their roles. They can perform more complex but clearly defined tasks with guidance and support from mentors.
2. **Intermediate:** University professionals at this level can independently carry out complex and clearly defined tasks. They are able to contribute effectively to addressing challenges within this field or discipline and are capable of overseeing or supervising routine activities carried out by their peers.
3. **Advanced:** University professionals at this level possess the deep knowledge, skills and competences required to operate at a high level. They have the ability to manage complex and open-ended tasks autonomously, resolve unique challenges, and provide wide ranging guidance to peers within their own practice.
4. **Exemplar:** University professionals at this level are exemplars of excellence. They have know-how and skills honed over years of highly impactful practice as well as a keen awareness of how to use their capabilities within a wide range of operational and strategic contexts. They can resolve highly complex and ambiguous challenges and have the ability to develop the performance of others and the systems in which they operate.

The behavioural indicators offer actionable criteria on a graduated scale to show how proficiency develops as a person's competency grows. There are numerous behavioural indicators aligned with each proficiency level, but not all the behavioural indicators will necessarily be relevant to achieve. It depends on your role, your objectives, and your current capability. Not all capabilities align to all roles, and not all proficiency levels need to be attained.

Below you can see an example of one of the capabilities and the behavioural descriptors across four proficiency levels.

Research-related Engagement: Engage interest-holders to build research impact, exchange knowledge, and create opportunities.

Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Exemplar
- Understand the importance of engaging respectfully with Māori and Indigenous communities in research contexts, including the ability to identify key interest-holders and understand their roles in the research ecosystem*. - Identify key interest-holders to a research project or initiative and their roles in the research ecosystem. - Respond to known partners in a timely, respectful, and culturally appropriate manner. - Share research findings with relevant audiences as instructed. - Maintain accurate records of interest-holder interactions and follow-up actions. - Contribute to preparation efforts for interest-holder engagement activities.	- Support and contribute to culturally appropriate engagement practices by maintaining respectful communication, organising engagement activities that reflect Te Ao Māori values, and facilitating knowledge exchange that is reciprocal and inclusive*. - Build and maintain culturally appropriate relationships with a range of interest-holders to facilitate reciprocal knowledge exchange. - Organise engagement activities such as workshops, seminars, or networking events to facilitate knowledge exchange, considering timings of cultural observances and needs for reciprocity. - Recognise and communicate opportunities to connect interest-holders with relevant research expertise. - Assess interest-holder feedback to identify potential improvements for engagement activities. - Coordinate engagement activities across internal departments - Represent the University effectively at external events and meetings.	- Develop and lead strategic engagement plans that embed Te Ao Māori principles, foster meaningful partnerships with Māori and Indigenous interest-holders, and support research objectives that are mutually beneficial*. - Develop and implement strategic engagement plans that align with the University's research priorities, values, and embed Te Ao Māori principles into practice. - Proactively identify and pursue strategic partnership opportunities to advance research objectives. - Negotiate and resolve complex interest-holder challenges. - Identify mutual benefits, potential barriers, and opportunities in interest-holder relationships and propose options or solutions. - Evaluate the effectiveness of engagement strategies and implement improvements. - Manage complex multi-party relationships across different sectors or contexts. - Secure buy-in and commitment from senior interest-holders for collaborative initiatives. - Shape institutional policy and strategy for research engagement.	- Champion transformative, sector-leading engagement practices that honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and embed sustainable, culturally grounded models of partnership that influence institutional policy and sectoral change*. - Lead interest-holder engagement activities that shape the research landscape at a sectoral, national, or international level. - Establish transformative research partnerships that honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and create significant value and impact across sectors. - Influence policy and decision-making in external organisations through strategic engagement. - Create sustainable engagement models that become embedded in institutional practice.
*Alignment with the Whāia Te Hihiri framework			
At this level, support staff begin by grounding themselves in manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, recognising that interest-holder engagement is more than task-oriented, it's people-oriented. They understand that appropriate engagement with Māori requires context, sensitivity, and a willingness to listen and learn.	This level deepens the practice of ako and kaitiakitanga. Staff can now support more dynamic engagement, ensure protocols (e.g., karakia, mihiimihi) are considered, and that knowledge is not extracted but shared responsibly. The focus is on intentional practice engagement that holds space for Indigenous voices.	This level embodies rangatiratanga (leadership and self-determination). Staff are confident navigating Te Ao Māori contexts and are able to negotiate ethical and values-based relationships. Engagement is intentional, purposeful, and strategic supporting research that uplifts communities and centres Indigenous aspirations. They are also mentoring others and influencing practice.	At this level, staff are not only practitioners but kaupapa leaders, embedding tikanga-informed systems across the institution. They actively shape long-term, intergenerational relationships and foster change that is mana-enhancing, community-led, and transformative. They hold space for Indigenous innovation and co-design impactful pathways forward.

The capability framework has been aligned with Whāia Te Hihiri, the University's emerging Māori research capability framework, to support relational, culturally responsive approaches to research management practice. The alignment provides additional behavioural indicators that strengthen engagement with Māori-informed research pathways.

4. Using the Capability Framework

The capability framework is designed to aid development conversations between you and your manager. Development goals focus on building the capabilities, skills, and experiences you need to achieve your Tupu goals, succeed in your current role, and grow over time. Development goals support performance goals and career progression, but do not form part of your end-of-year Tupu rating. An interactive tool has been developed to help you explore, self-assess, and create a personalised development plan. The interactive tool will launch in October 2026, until then the full framework can be downloaded as a PDF.

In early 2027 the RMA capabilities will be available within Hono under the performance module, under development plans, and once you have created a development plan under leadership and

capabilities. You can use the online RMA capability framework tool to explore the capabilities, complete a self-assessment and start drafting a development plan, you then select the capability you want to focus on in Hono.

Recommended approach to self-assess your capabilities:

1. Look through the list of capabilities and note down the ones relevant to your role;
2. Read through the descriptors, starting at foundational level and moving across to exemplar, for each of the capabilities you think may be relevant to your role;
3. Note down which proficiency level you think you sit within currently for each capability;
4. Decide which capability area you would like to focus on for the year and note down some ideas and questions around professional development related to the capabilities you can discuss with your manager.

What is a development plan?

A development plan is where you note down actionable indicators to develop capabilities important to your role and your career aspirations. The interactive tool for the RMA capability framework allows you to filter down to the capabilities you are most interested in developing to create a personalised plan. One or two development goals per year is appropriate to support capability building and career growth.

Once you know what capability or capabilities you want to focus on for the year, you can select these in Hono under Tupu Development Plan (embedded from early 2027). This plan can be used in check-ins with your manager and provide guidance on where you need additional support, learning, or experience to develop further in your current role or a future role you are interested in.

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Tupu Development Plan: Julia Mouatt - Employee Plan

Actions

20/04/2026 - 18/12/2026

Evaluated By: Julia Mouatt

How To Video

Leadership and Capabilities

18 Items

Capability	Description
He Iti Kahurangi: We build belonging	* We value each person and listen to each other. * We are open and curious as we skillfully navigate diverse cultures and communities. * We are aware of our own identities and perspectives and how they affect others. * We are whanau (friends, allies, family), actively promoting inclusion. * We authentically work through differences, making it safe to respectfully express views.
He Iti Kahurangi: We clear the path	* We are considered and selective, focusing on what really matters. * We ask bold questions and have the courage to stop things. * We simplify how we do things. * We aim high, while managing workload in a sustainable way.

It is important to engage with your manager during this process. Either use the tool together during a development meeting to discuss your priorities for the year or generate a plan that you can share with your manager in your next meeting, as a starting point for a discussion on your development.

Questions to ask yourself before using the tool:

- What skills, knowledge, and abilities do I frequently use in my role?
- What do I do well (what are my strengths)?
- What new skills do I want to learn?
- Which capabilities would I like to improve upon to progress in my career?
- What are my career aspirations?

Practical examples and scenarios

Example 1.

You have recently moved into a new position within the RMA function. During a check-in with your manager, the two of you use the capability framework to identify your current capability level with the proficiency level expected for your role. You identify one capability where your current proficiency is not yet at the target level for the role. Together, with your manager, you agree on some development actions to help you build your capability and progress towards the target level over the course of the year. These actions could include formal learning opportunities, mentoring, or a stretch assignment.

Example 2.

You have been in your current role for several years and are interested in looking at future opportunities in other teams within the RMA function. During a career development conversation with your manager, you identify a role that interests you. Using the interactive tool to identify the capabilities and proficiency required for that role, you compare these to your current capabilities, and identify a capability you've had limited experience in. Using the behavioural indicators in the capability framework, you and your manager identify development opportunities that provide you with exposure to that capability over the course of the year. These opportunities could include job shadowing, cross-functional projects, or targeted learning.

5. FAQs

Q1: *Do I need to meet all 10 capabilities for my role?*

A1: No. The ten capabilities have been identified to capture the full range of skills and activities across the RMA function. Each role will map to a selected number of capabilities. The interactive tool will give you the option to choose a role to highlight the identified capabilities and proficiencies.

Q2: *What if I feel that my capability sits across two proficiency levels in the same capability?*

A2: When mapping your own personal proficiency to a capability, you may find that you can self-select across multiple proficiency levels. That's ok as your capability is associated not only with your current role but with your accumulated past experiences. When using the interactive tool to identify relevant capabilities for a particular role, the proficiency level selected will reflect the target level expected for that role, as opposed to the baseline proficiency of someone who is new to role.

Q3: Can I use the framework for career planning?

A3: Yes, the framework is a tool to support you with your career planning. You can self-assess where you are at in terms of capabilities needed for your current role or for a role you are interested in moving into and note down which capabilities you would like to focus on for the year to grow in your role or move into a different role. You can also explore which capabilities are mapped to which roles within RMA that you may be interested in to help you choose a suitable career path based on your strengths and interests.

Q4: How does the framework relate to Tupu performance and development goals?

A4: The framework can help you set your development goal(s) for the year once you know which capabilities you would like to further develop. Your development goals support you in your role and in achieving your performance goals for the year.

Q5: What if I want to change my development goals partway through the year?

A5: At any stage you can change or update your development goals or re-assess your capability proficiencies and discuss development opportunities with your manager or mentor.

6. Tips for Managers

The RMA capability framework has been designed to support development conversations with your team members. Managers could also use it to support in recruitment and selection, or workforce planning processes.

Use this tool in collaboration with each member of your team.

- This tool can be used to plan their development priorities for the year ahead. Ensure that your team members understand that the framework will support them to meet their current and future career objectives.
- Encourage them to think about the skills they have and what they are interested in developing ahead of your meeting.
- It is recommended they select 1-2 capabilities to focus on. These capabilities may be core to their current role, and/or future aspirational roles.

For example, with a team member who has been in role for several years, you may suggest or they may choose 1 capability to develop in line with their current objectives and 1 capability to develop for their future career goals. Or, if a team member is new to role, you may suggest or they could choose 2 objectives that align with their current role to support them to develop their competencies as they settle in role.

- Discuss any gaps or areas of concern that your team member has with their own development.
- Look at training and educational opportunities offered by the University and beyond.
- Consider ways of supporting their development that sit outside formal training and education activities, like, mentoring, job shadowing, service opportunities, communities of practice/networks, cross-team projects.
- Be prepared to acknowledge and discuss lateral job movements as career pathways. For example, a 'sideways' move into a new department or function can result in developing new capabilities instead of enhancing current ones.

Enforcing the framework can be tricky and team members may feel overwhelmed by the expectation that they drive their development.

- Ahead of your first meeting, decide whether it would be useful to draft a development plan together to use as a focus for the discussion, or whether it would be beneficial to have your team member generate a development plan themselves. Whichever method you choose, emphasise to your team member that it is a starting point to generate a conversation, and ensure they are part of the process, so they feel invested in their future.
- Make regular time to meet with your team members to discuss their development plan throughout the year.
- Use the meeting to talk about successes and any unexpected outcomes.
- Take a coaching approach to meetings; ask questions to understand how your team member perceives their progress, help them to identify solutions to challenges, encourage them to reflect on lessons learned and what they would do differently next time.
- These plans are not set in stone! Adjust the plan when required.

7. Additional University principles and frameworks

The RMA capability framework is the function specific framework for the RMA function to be used in conjunction with the capability framework for all staff, Nga Taumata Tutukinga which focuses on general, or top of the T, capabilities, as well as the university's signature leadership principles.

- **Ngā Taumata Tutukinga:** <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/intranet/work-personal/career-development/staff-learning/professional/nga-taumata-tutukinga.html>
- **He Iti Kahurangi (signature leadership principles):** [He Iti Kahurangi, our signature leadership practices – University of Auckland](#)

- **Our culture, values and te ao Māori principles:**
<https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/intranet/work-personal/purpose-te-ao-maori-principles-values.html>

8. Governance and review of the framework

The RMA capability framework was developed by a working group under the Professional development for RMA SIG and the continued review and governance of the framework sits with the SIG. Currently the plan is to review the framework annually, gathering feedback regarding how the framework is being used and whether the capabilities are still relevant and if any need to be updated or whether capability mapping to roles need to be updated. The SIG will also run annual workshops to help staff and managers use the framework for their development planning and goal setting.