

Faculty of Business and Economics

Summer Research Scholarships

2026/2027 Projects (Management and International Business)

Project code:	BUS009
Project title:	Circular Economy for Business: Drivers, Opportunities, and Risks for Sustainable Transitions
Discipline:	Management and International Business
Supervisor(s)	Dan Tisch
Contact details	d.tisch@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong attention to detail and organisational skills • Interest in sustainability, circular economy, and business transformation • Ability to critically evaluate academic and industry literature • Basic data management and analytical skills • Proficiency with Microsoft Excel or similar software • Strong written and verbal communication skills • Ability to work independently and collaboratively within a research team
Project description	
<p>Join a summer research project exploring climate change, business sustainability, and the circular economy. Working alongside an experienced researcher, you will gain hands-on experience in the early stages of a systematic literature review and data preparation. You will compile and analyse information from diverse academic, policy, and industry sources, assess data quality using established criteria, and synthesise findings to understand the drivers, opportunities, and risks associated with how businesses adapt to climate-related challenges and sustainability transitions. This project provides practical training in literature review methods, data management, critical analysis, and sustainability research, equipping you with valuable skills for postgraduate study and careers in business, policy, consulting, and research. You will contribute to a growing body of knowledge on climate resilience and sustainable business practices while developing an understanding of how research informs decision-making. The project is linked to the University of Auckland's Circular Economy for Business Research Beacon, providing exposure to a broader interdisciplinary research community and opportunities to engage with ongoing collaborations. The findings will contribute to future collaborative publications and help build the evidence base for larger externally funded research projects focused on sustainability, circular economy innovation, and climate resilience.</p>	

Project code:	BUS010
Project title:	The Non-Human Innovator: The Emergent Role of Agentic AI in Open Innovation
Discipline:	Management and International Business
Supervisor(s)	Jitao (Mario) Yan Yat Ming Ooi
Contact details	mario.yan@auckland.ac.nz y.ooi@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary data collection, classification, and documentation using a systematic approach

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active collaboration and clear, consistent communication with the supervisors • Academic writing skills, including the use of academic language and APA7th references
<p>Project description</p> <p>Open innovation, defined as a distributed innovation process based on purposively managed knowledge flows across organisational boundaries, using mechanisms in line with the organisation’s business model, has traditionally been a human-centric activity in which human actors orchestrate knowledge flows in and out of an organisation. The rise of Agentic AI endows AI systems with human-like agency, enabling AI agents to perform complex and multi-step knowledge workflows without human involvement. This study seeks to map the fundamental changes Agentic AI brings to cognitive, creative, and evaluative work in the open innovation context, and to identify the shifts in human agency that occur when non-human innovators take over tasks once dominated by human actors.</p> <p>The student is tasked with performing a secondary data collection, analysis, synthesis, and narrative development to provide illustrative cases and demonstrative examples to support the study’s conceptualisations. Students will search for public information, including but not limited to industry reports, newspapers, broadcasts, past interviews, and LinkedIn posts, to gather practical applications of Agentic AI and AI agents in real-world innovation stories.</p> <p>The project is timely, as businesses are seeking evidence-informed experience to guide their development of sensible innovation strategies that incorporate advanced forms of AI. Students will be guided by the supervisors throughout the process to develop secondary research skills, including data collection, analysis, and visualization, and to receive some foundational training in qualitative research.</p>	

Project code:	BUS011
Project title:	Towards an Aotearoa New Zealand Startup Monitor: Mapping Entrepreneurship Data and Ecosystem Evidence
Discipline:	Management and International Business
Supervisor(s)	Simon Hensellek
Contact details	simon.hensellek@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong interest in entrepreneurship, startups, innovation policy, and economic development. • Ability to conduct systematic desktop research and synthesise academic and practitioner sources in structured ways. • Basic understanding of empirical large-scale data collection and analysis. • Competence with Excel/Google Sheets; familiarity with qualitative coding or reference management tools desirable. • Clear written communication and attention to detail.

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Project description

New Zealand has an active and increasingly visible entrepreneurship ecosystem, yet the available evidence and data base remains fragmented across international surveys, government statistics, investment reports, and ecosystem mapping exercises. This project will assess whether Aotearoa New Zealand would benefit from a dedicated “Startup Monitor”, comparable to leading European approaches such as the German Startup Monitor or European Startup Monitor. The student will identify, catalogue, and critically evaluate existing entrepreneurship data collections and reports, including sources such as Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey (GUESSS), Stats NZ business demography, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Startup Genome, and venture-capital ecosystem reports. The project will ask: What dimensions of entrepreneurial activity are currently measured? Which founder, firm, ecosystem, and policy questions remain under-explored? And how could a Aotearoa New Zealand Startup Monitor generate more actionable insights for researchers, policymakers, ecosystem organisations, and founders? Working with Dr Simon Hensellek, who has co-authored the German and European Startup Monitor, the student will contribute to a conceptually grounded assessment of the country’s entrepreneurship evidence infrastructure and help shape the foundations for a future national monitoring initiative.

Project code:	BUS012
Project title:	Decent work and sustainable business in practice: Developing teaching cases for the SDG 8 Hub
Discipline:	Management and International Business
Supervisor(s)	Helen Delaney
Contact details	h.delaney@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong written communication and ability to write clearly for an academic audience; • Qualitative research skills, including literature searching and synthesis; • Ability to conduct and document semi-structured interviews; analytical thinking and capacity to identify the ethical and strategic dimensions of business decisions; • Self-directed work habits and ability to manage a project across a defined timeline; familiarity with social and environmental sustainability in business contexts (desirable but not essential).

Project description

How do businesses navigate the tension between profit and people? This project gives a student the opportunity to explore that question by developing two original teaching cases grounded in real-world challenges related to United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. The cases will be created for use in undergraduate and postgraduate business courses, and will become part of the teaching resources of the Business School Case Centre and SDG 8 Hub in the Faculty of Business and Economics. The SDG 8 Hub brings together researchers, educators, and practitioners committed to understanding how workers, organisations, and economies can grow in ways that are inclusive, fair, and sustainable. Working alongside the supervisor and core Hub team, the student will identify compelling organisational scenarios and drawing on publicly available information, published reports, and expert interviews craft two well-structured teaching

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cases complete with discussion questions and teaching notes. This is an exciting opportunity to contribute directly to advancing the goals of SDG 8 through business education, while developing professional research, writing, and analytical skills.

Project code:	BUS013
Project title:	Pacific Perspectives on Inclusive Economies
Discipline:	Management and International Business
Supervisor(s)	Billie Lythberg Amber Nicholson
Contact details	b.lythberg@auckland.ac.nz amber.nicholson@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some knowledge of Oceania and its various cultures • Strong internet research skills (e.g., academic databases, online library searches) • Critical thinking skills • Clear written communication skills • Attention to detail
Project description	
<p>Inclusive capitalism is often discussed as a pathway to more equitable and sustainable economic systems. Dominant models, however, tend to reflect Western assumptions about markets, growth, and value creation. This research shifts this focus by asking how other cultures and societies create inclusive economic systems, who or what is (not) included, and how value is created.</p> <p>Unlike previous summer scholar work examining the relationship between inclusive capitalism and Māori organisations (2023-24), this project takes a comparative systems perspective, examining how diverse cultural traditions conceptualise economic inclusion and value creation across Oceania and beyond. The student will identify and deconstruct different cultural conceptualisations of inclusive economic systems, including their definitions, principles, and priorities. This research will draw heavily on Indigenous worldviews, community-based economic models, and sustainability frameworks that recognise broader social or environmental responsibilities.</p>	

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This project is ideal for students interested in inclusive capitalism, sustainable economic models, and cross-cultural research. As part of this project, the student will contribute to expanding knowledge on inclusive economic systems.

Project code:	BUS014
Project title:	How does Generative AI enable circularity in Small Businesses: A scoping review and research agenda
Discipline:	Management and International Business
Supervisor(s)	Hanoku Bathula Guy Bate
Contact details	hanoku.bathula@auckland.ac.nz g.bate@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic knowledge of marketing and tourism • Strong internet research skills • Foundational knowledge (more expertise is desirable) of sustainability, sustainable development goals, circular economy principles and Generative AI tools. • Students need strong literature searching skills on Scopus and Web of Science, and MS Excel. • An ability to critically appraise and synthesise is desirable. Previous experience of writing systematic literature review or scoping review is ideal. • A good writing skills and evidence of publishing will make the applicant stand out. • Knowledge and use of software such as NVivo for coding is also desirable.
Project description	
<p>AI is impacting all sectors and processes, including small businesses. Our project will examine how generative AI is enabling circularity in small businesses by synthesizing evidence from recent studies of its application in reducing waste and supporting climate action. Drawing on the growing literature on GenAI-enabled circular business models and circular innovation, the scoping review will map where and how GenAI is currently used to support circular practices in areas such as product design, product-as-a-service models, or extending product lifecycles, improved product recovery and usage.</p>	

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The study will focus on small businesses, which often face resource constraints and are likely to benefit greatly by using GenAI for efficiency and innovation, often to overcome their limited or lack of resources.

Using a systematic or a scoping review, contingent on the number of papers we find, our study will identify the range of GenAI applications, business functions involved and reported benefits, risks and challenges in the context of GenAI application or adoption to enhance circularity.

The findings will be used to develop a conceptual framework and a targeted research agenda that can form a basis for subsequent empirical data collection both qualitatively and quantitatively. The implications are relevant to both practitioners and policy makers.